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*Béla Bartók
1945–1995*

*A Curtain of Indifference to Follow
the Iron Curtain?*

*The Story Behind
an Illyés Poem*

*A Film by Paul Fejos
and
Peverell Marley Rediscovered*

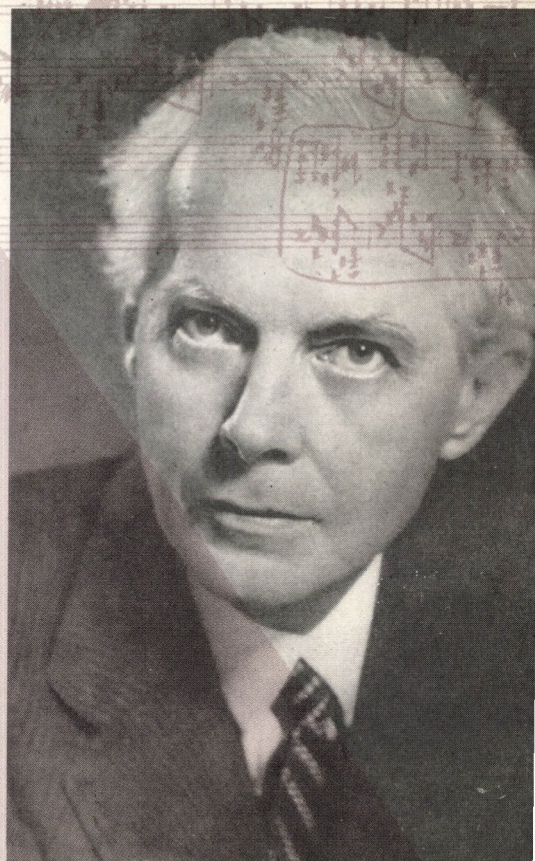
*Hungary and the Problem of
National Minorities*

*Fifties Cultural Policy in
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Censorship in the 1980s

*The Rival Images of
Árpád and Saint Stephen*

*László Moholy-Nagy
and Film*



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A Curtain of Indifference to Follow the Iron Curtain?

In February 1989, in Trieste, I took part in an international colloquium organized by the *Istituto Gramsci da Venezia Friuli* on the possibility of reforming communism.

Opinions were divided. Participants included historians, sociologists, economists from the West and from Central and Eastern Europe, including Russia. What was at issue was the chances of *perestroika* and *glasnost* that Gorbachev had initiated four years earlier.

I was among those to express scepticism when it came to the possibility of producing a democratic communist system which continued to rest on the pillars of a single party, control of the armed forces, especially the political police, and control of information and of the economy. In my way of looking at things, and I was by no means alone, the communist system, as it came down from Stalin, was a block whose functioning could not be improved by step by step reforms. What was conceived in a revolution could only be changed by another revolution.

It seemed therefore that the undoubtedly brave measures taken by Gorbachev to create a model of a reformed socialism, first in the Soviet Union and later in the other communist countries, would become part of a long line that includes

Bukharin, Eugène Varga, Tito, Djilas, Imre Nagy, the Polish revisionists, and Dubček. Perhaps one could start this series with Lenin at the end of his life, a subject to which Moshe Lewin has devoted a memorable book.

The idea of a more democratic and more flexible communism, reconcilable with free peasant property, is theoretically feasible. Authoritarian regimes, enlightened despotisms, liberal empires and constitutional monarchies have all existed in the past. In

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Preuves. His works include Histoire des démocraties populaires (Seuil).

The above is an address given at a conference entitled "From perestroika to the search for a new international order", held in Genoa in March 1995.

It appeared in Esprit of May 1995.

our own time there have been dictatorships of the right, military dictatorships, which set free the spirit of enterprise without tolerating political opposition. The simple fact is, however, that experience has belied the efforts to bring Bolshevik thinking closer to that of the Mensheviks, their hostile brothers of yore. Revisionist initiatives have all failed.

One may object that in at least two communist countries, in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968, reforms failed only because of intervention by the Soviet Army. In late October 1956 Imre Nagy, the communist reformer, had control over the movement towards democracy and independence, and only provocation by the police apparatus, supported by the army of occupation, derailed it into an anti-Soviet, but not anti-socialist, insurrection. There are good grounds, however, for presuming that, without Soviet intervention, once a multi-party system was introduced, and Hungary left the Warsaw Pact, which Imre Nagy had agreed to, the logic of events would have led to the marginalization of the communists and to the dismantling of the system, as finally did happen in 1989. An analogical observation could be made on Dubček's reforms.

Starting with the summer of 1988, ever louder voices in Prague clamoured for democracy as such, no longer content with the democratization of communism. What was attempted then was not a reformed communism, but a communism transformed into social democracy. After 1989 we did after all witness—under cover of neo-liberal phrases—the birth of an Austrian or Swedish model in some of the ex-communist countries, a model that is already somewhat outmoded in its countries of origin. Furthermore, Slovak separatism was already very much present in the Prague Spring of 1968.

Tito's Yugoslavia and Mao's, later Deng Hsiaoping's, China are the sole examples of a reformed communism, differing from Stalinism, but true to Leninism. In both these states, politically powerful communism—in the case of China also totalitarian ideologically—was able to consolidate by admitting some decentralization, private initiative, and inequalities of incomes. Political *étatisme* and economic liberalism coexisted, in China they continue to coexist, in some ways resembling dictatorships of the right, such as those—until recently—of South Korea, Pinochet's Chile, or of the Institutional Revolutionary Party in Mexico. Yugoslavia, the model for post-colonial Algeria, has displayed the vulnerability of such experiments. True, Titoism was principally destroyed by national forces, indeed centrifugal and contradictory national communists, but the dawn of consumerism and the attractions of the West played a role of equal importance in its decline. In China they were able to play the trump cards of considerable ethnic homogeneity, the pragmatism and organizational skills of the bureaucracy, and the special aptitude of the Chinese to adapt to changing conditions ensuring the survival of communism. As Liu King, one of their leaders now in exile in the U.S. declared, dissident intellectuals lack the freedom necessary for articulation: "The police and the army are still largely in posses-

sion of the means and the will to repress them." One might well ask oneself, however, how long this new experiment in the cohabitation of fire and water will last.

One might conclude also, as his German biographer Gerd Ruge does, whether, if Gorbachev had been willing or able to behave as a sovereign dictator at the head of an all-powerful military or police apparatus, comparable to the Chinese one, if he had not granted total freedom of speech to the intellectuals and the right to vote to the people, to put it briefly, if he had behaved like Deng or Milosevic, like the political bosses of Vietnam, or like Iliescu, he would have had a better chance of staying in power and carry on with his economic perestroika. By setting free the press, by pursuing the otherwise attractive policy of small steps, with democracy as the goal, he opened the way to divisions within the political elite, to the dissolution of the central administration and to separatism fomented by the elites of the constituent republics. Yeltsin inherited from Gorbachev the quasi impossible mission of creating democracy without organized democrats, in order to attempt to achieve a controlled transition. To be sure, he has, in the words of his democratic adviser, Yakovlev, "closed the gates of the past," he has "created the premises for a decisive step towards a renewal based on democracy, law, the market, and liberty." But after promising beginnings, Russia will no doubt have to go through an anguished phase of disintegration, and of power struggles, before the country is in a position to establish a federation or a confederation and a functioning economy.

In three of the former satellite countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the collapse of communism meant a velvet revolution, a peaceful process of democratization quite remarkable for its speed. This was above all due to the absence of any sort of Soviet interference. Gorbachev was, however, in a position to forbid the Hungarians to open their country's frontiers to East German tourists, an opening which triggered off, in a domino effect, the collapse of communist domination and of Soviet hegemony in all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Deprived of support by the Kremlin, the communist parties were driven to negotiate the transfer of power, communist parliaments amended constitutions, thereby introducing representative government and *Rechtstaat* elements. Communist militias allowed themselves to be disarmed, communist parties changed their names and Menshevikized themselves, subjecting themselves to the will of the people. Since the revolutions were negotiated there was no need for a general purge of the sort which Germany and Italy, and the countries occupied by them, experienced after the Second World War. In Poland, in Hungary, and in the Czech Lands democratic traditions did survive. The abolition of censorship, the setting free of the critical spirit, and successive electoral campaigns have not provoked violent confrontations. A minimum national consensus concerning the institutions of parliamentary democracy was easily established. This was not the case in Romania, where the reform communists, headed by

Iliescu, seized power, relying on a *Securitate* and an administrative apparatus which remained almost intact, establishing a pseudo-democratic regime which they are able to control thanks to their alliance with ultranationalist elements and the complaisance of the West. In Bulgaria and Albania, ex-communists, more or less sincerely converted to social democracy, indeed to liberalism, continue to govern decrepit countries. The liberals, few in number, lack the skills and experience to replace them in key administrative or economic posts.

Given all that, it must be said that the transition from a planned economy to a market economy deprived of its Eastern outlets has been, and will continue to be, much more difficult than the passage to a liberal democracy. We all know that no liberal democracy of any kind can be stable unless it is based on a sound economy capable of assuring a decent standard of living and satisfactory prospects for the future to the greatest number. The Weimar syndrome is still valid as a cautionary tale.

I do not propose to provide a detailed analysis of the situation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It suffices to say that albeit there are encouraging signs of the emergence of a spirit of enterprise, of the presence of skilled management and of a relatively well-qualified working class, the situation as a whole is precarious and in a number of countries it verges on catastrophe. There is much that resembles the developing countries, that is what has lately been called the Third World: a widening gap between areas of modernization and of more or less legal getting rich quick, and the pauperization of the majority which is particularly hitting what had lately been the middle classes, and even the upwardly mobile, but also the young and the retired. Around 60 per cent of the population are called on to bear the burden of transition through inflation and unemployment, hitherto unknown, the accumulation of all too visible inequalities, and cut-backs in the social services and culture. The debate between the partisans of shock therapy and those who favoured a steadier pace got under way in the context of the need for further sacrifices. Gradualism was easier to accept for governments anxious to avoid tensions and possible explosions that are always threatening. Poland bravely chose the first option. But whatever is the chosen option, protests against the growing social costs of the transition were unavoidable. This explains the 1994 electoral success, at the expense of the liberals and of the right, of the socialist parties of Lithuania, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria, socialist parties that are the offspring of the former communist parties, supported by trade unions which naturally defended—just as in capitalist countries—social entitlements even when these are an obstacle to modernization.

Paradoxically, the dismantling of the planned economy had the most severe effects on those countries which, at the time of the 1989 changeover, had fur-

thrust advanced along the road of economic reforms—decentralization, the redirection of exports towards the West, and the creation of management structures concerned with the introduction of new technologies. Hungary, the most liberal and hence the most indebted of all former communist countries, offers a striking example. In spite of the immense service rendered to the West by the opening of the country's frontier towards Austria, the post-communist government of Hungary was encouraged to accept its obligation to repay, to the last cent, a foreign debt of \$22 billion without being granted any concessions, without any proposed rescheduling, let alone a partial cancelling of a debt whose growth had chiefly served to subsidise "lame ducks." To be sure, the decisions of the Antall government flattered national pride and improved the credibility of Hungary. The fact remains, however, that this country has, since 1990, transferred abroad some 15 or 16 billion dollars by way of repayment or debt servicing. As a comparison, it may be noted that the former GDR, with only twice as many inhabitants as Hungary, has received an injection of 30 to 35 billion dollars in the same period. Hungary needed to invest at least 15 billion dollars to make a start on structural change, on the modernization of obsolete enterprises, on privatization and infrastructural development. True, in these five years Hungary received 7 billion dollars worth of direct foreign investment, half of all the direct foreign investments into former communist countries, but this still leaves a net deficit of 8 billion in the balance of payments. The socialist-liberal government, which succeeded Antall's, has continued to follow the crushing policy of debt repayment. The foreign debt has meanwhile grown from 22 to 28 billion dollars, not because of new credits to finance new projects but in order to cover payments. Expert opinion has it that Hungary, in order to straighten out her finances, needs a surplus of 3 to 4 billion dollars in the current balance of payments in order to cover repayments of the debt. The need to repay debts has also warped the process of privatization since the government has felt obliged to subordinate this to the need to obtain foreign exchange. Whole industries were sold to bidders abroad: 80 per cent of insurance, the majority of newspapers, etc. Only a small professional and political elite had access to property; 90 per cent of the population were excluded, seeing their standard of living decline year by year.

To be sure, there are economists who are of the opinion that Hungarians still dispose reserves of energy, endurance and public spirit sufficient to allow them to survive the lean years without falling into sloughs of despair or exploding into discontent. But there is reason to fear that the optimists may be disappointed and that, in the absence of appropriate help, this new experiment will fail.

Mutatis mutandis, the problems which Hungary has to confront apply to all the ex-communist countries. They are short of capital, their industrial equipment is obsolete, their infrastructure patchy, and they live above their means. Poland apparently is managing more easily, having been up against the wall in

1989, bravely accepting shock therapy. The Czechs, well in arrears in 1989, have profited from the Polish and Hungarian experiences, and also from their proximity to Germany. The Slovaks and Romanians, not as much in debt, mitigated the slowness of change by stressing anti-Russian and anti-Hungarian nationalist agitation. It should be noted that the Hungarians, locked in the vice of their neighbours who hold large Hungarian minorities hostage and threaten to renew the Little Entente of the period between the two wars, cannot resort to any nationalist diversion.

One may judge this picture too sombre, and yet things look even worse if one adds the feeling of insecurity which is afflicting the countries of the area. The Warsaw Pact was dissolved on their independence; now, faced with a possibility of the reassertion of a Russia striving for hegemony, they are left without international guarantees of their security. In fact Russia has tentatively revived the notion of limited sovereignty—without doing so explicitly—which was proclaimed by Brezhnev in July 1968, at the time of the Czechoslovak crisis. In December 1994, Yeltsin allowed it to be understood in Budapest that he would consider an extension of the NATO umbrella to cover the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to be opposed to Russian interests. On the 14th of February 1995, Chernomyrdin, the Russian Prime Minister, declared in Bratislava: "We do not understand those who wish to accelerate the process of enlarging NATO. What need do they have of this? What are their concealed intentions? Do some of them desire a confrontation?" Such words would not appear as menacing as they do if Russia's neighbours felt certain of the democratization of the ex-empire, and if the West had not shown such indulgence towards Serbian aggression against the other successor states of Yugoslavia and towards Russian military action against the Chechens, an indulgence that recalls the appeasement of Hitler, and an inability to ensure respect for human rights, the right of nations to self-determination, and the West's own principles of liberty and solidarity.

In any event, it will certainly prove difficult to persuade those in charge in the Kremlin—whether that happens to be Yeltsin or someone else—that the enlargement of NATO would only be a danger to Russia if Russia entertains aggressive intentions towards her former satellites or towards the West.

In fact, and this is how I wish to conclude, the West holds the key to a solution to all the problems of transition. It may shock some, but I have to say that the Great Western Powers, Europe and the United States, bear a serious responsibility, for various reasons, for the dramatic situation in which the ex-satellite countries now find themselves. To start with—to go back no further—they are responsible for confirming at Helsinki the *fait accompli* which Stalin accomplished with impunity by his arbitrary interpretation of the Yalta agreement as it related to the liberated countries. Secondly, they were responsible for an *Ostpolitik* of dialogue and credits, aimed at stabilizing a world balance of power, which had as its effect the continued survival of communist regimes which were

suffering a crisis of stagnation. Thirdly, for having refused, in 1989–1990, to come to the aid of states ready to become part of the European and Western economic and political system, along the lines of the Marshall Plan. The principles of the latter were perfectly applicable to countries that had suffered incalculable damage due to a domination which had been imposed on them with the assent of the West. There is a moral responsibility for an absence of solidarity and understanding in the face of difficulties with which nations that are so near have to contend, which are nevertheless ready to share the fate of a type of civilization which they had idealized for so long and whose profound crisis they are now weighing up.

The new democracies observe with anxiety the growth in Europe and in the United States of isolationism, of protectionism and other currents aimed at excluding those outside. They see political elites displaying a growing reluctance to shoulder the white man's burden, the responsibility of rescuing the countries of Africa, of the Pacific and of Latin America in difficulty. Are the new democracies not right to think that belonging to the same civilization, having traditional links that were cut by two monstrous wars, entitles them to priority treatment?

The Iron Curtain has disappeared but there is a risk that it will be replaced by a curtain of indifference. Will Europe, instead of growing larger, contract to a hard but split kernel? Will the United States not deviate towards a policy of their own *sacré égoïsme*? Will protectionist and chauvinist tendencies perhaps get the upper hand in the countries of Western Europe? Will NATO allow itself to be transformed into a UN without a compass in order to reassure a Russia growing more arrogant as she grows weaker? Will the West lack direction, a plan for the future? Such are the questions which the elites in the former communist countries are asking at a time when indulgence shown those responsible for violating the rights of man and the principle of non-violence, indulgence shown those responsible for massacres of civilians and ethnic cleansing, in Europe and elsewhere, do not augur well for democracy and stability in the eastern half of our continent. ■

Mátyás Domokos

A Few Words About a Single Sentence

The Story Behind an Illyés Poem

When did Gyula Illyés actually write his most famous poem “Egy mondat a zsarnokságról” (A Sentence about Tyranny)? It was published first, and for the last time for long years to come, in the November 2 issue of *Irodalmi Újság* (Literary Gazette) during the last days of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Illyés felt it necessary to give the actual date of composition at the end of the poem—1950. However, for thirty years, the arts commissars of the Kádár regime adamantly insinuated that he had antedated the poem and that he had actually written it in the feverish autumn days of 1956, inspired by the experience, and illusion, of overthrowing the communist dictatorship. At the same time, and perhaps because of this, the “non-existent” censorship of “existing socialism” made it impossible for the poem to be republished, whether in a newspaper or a review, or in Illyés’s own books, including various editions of “collected” poems. Indeed, anyone purveying the poem in any form or through any channel could expect the police to take action against them, especially in the aftermath of the revolution. In the meantime, the poem acquired a historic patina and a place in the public mind on a par with Sándor Petőfi’s “National Song”, a poem that had played an inflammatory role in the 1848 Hungarian revolution and subsequent war of independence. It was copied in different versions and passed from hand to hand in secret.

What we have to do is separate truth from myth in this romantic story about the long-suppressed poem. And to examine whether we can take the poet’s word on the date of its conception.

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contemporary Hungarian literature.*

*He is one of the editors of the literary
monthly Holmi.*

That we can do. As, however, for a long time there was no official recognition of the existence of the poem (it could not be quoted or discussed in any form or even referred to) there was no way to clarify the textual issues arising, or deliberately created, around it. It was simply unimaginable

that the mystery, so typical of both poet and poem, could even begin to be fathomed. The poem was eventually printed in the posthumous *Menet a ködben* (Procession in the Fog, 1988), an edition of the collected works of Gyula Illyés, who died in 1983. This gave an opportunity to examine textual, biographical and historical facts and documents and to weigh personal recollections.

I was the editor in charge of Illyés's books from the mid-sixties up to his death in one of the big state publishing houses. I was still an arts student when I first met him at the end of the forties, one of a group of young hopefuls that had gathered around the review *Válasz* (Response). The latter was amongst the most celebrated literary reviews in the post-war years, a forum for the best of contemporary writing, with Illyés as editor and Márta Sárközi, widow of the poet György Sárközi (a Jew who had been killed in 1945) its driving spirit. The greatest political thinker of the time, István Bibó, whose lectures I had attended at law school in the University of Szeged, also published his studies and essays there. In 1949 *Válasz* was closed down under the dictatorship. The young people attached to it, though fewer in number, stayed together, meeting on Sundays in Márta Sárközi's tiny flat up in the Buda hills. (It might be added that our hostess, who was then earning a difficult livelihood as a seamstress, was the daughter of the playwright Ferenc Molnár. He was living in New York and because of the cold war was unable to lend any support to his daughter and grandchildren in Hungary.) Gyula Illyés also occasionally turned up, while Márta Sárközi kept in regular contact with him and his wife, Flóra Kozmutza, a psychologist and teacher of handicapped children, who had trained with Lipót Szondi.

We first heard of the existence of the poem from Márta Sárközi. She told us that Illyés had shown it to her, and in his house at Tihany, on Lake Balaton, he had also read it to István Bibó who told him something on the lines of "It's a fine poem, but let's admit it's a bit too long!" I heard the story later (which sounded like an anecdote) from Bibó himself; after 1956, when the poem had achieved a place in the pantheon of Hungarian poems, Illyés would often recall it with a smile.

All this could still be considered myth, were it not for a document that has since come to light and provides conclusive evidence. This is a letter written by István Bibó to Zoltán Szabó, the journalist and essayist who had resigned his diplomatic post at the Hungarian embassy in Paris and emigrated to Britain after the communist takeover in 1948. In the letter, Bibó asks if Szabó could somehow help to have an issue of *Válasz* published in the West. He also draws up a list of contents for the planned issue, which includes Illyés's poem. (See Tibor Huszár, "Bibó István, a gondolkodó, a politikus" [István Bibó, Thinker and Politician]. In: Bibó István: *Válogatott tanulmányok* [Selected Studies], vol. 3, p. 462. Magvető, Budapest, 1986).

"A Sentence about Tyranny", then, was written in all probability in 1950, not in 1956. The later date claimed for it is also improbable if viewed from the psy-

chological viewpoint of creation. No poem of its length—183 lines in the *Irodalmi Újság* version—can be written as a quick improvisation, even in the “holy furor” of the greatest inspiration. Yet this politically charged allegation did have an element of reality to some extent, as was revealed later on. For this reason it is worth following the afterlife of this poem, so carefully kept from the public.

Ten years had passed, and the consolidation that followed 1956 had taken place. The relationship between writers, amongst them Illyés, and the political authorities was “settled”, as contemporary usage had it. Certain grey eminences in charge of literary policies attempted to “detoxicate” the poem. While the 1966 edition of the standard anthology *Hét évszázad magyar versei* (Seven Centuries of Hungarian Poetry) was being prepared, one of its editors, Pál Pándi, a member of the influential Theoretical Work Team attached to the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, came up with an idea. Probably on a suggestion from one or other prominent party leader, he said that as the relationship between Illyés and literary policy makers was becoming settled, it would be worthwhile and useful to resolve the issue of a poem “that had taken on so characteristic a role”, as he put it, in both Illyés’s oeuvre and in recent Hungarian history. This should take the form of publishing the poem at last in the “primary public sphere” in Hungary. (By that time a recording of the poet himself reading it had been brought out in 1965 by Occidental Press, a small Hungarian-language press in Washington. They later also published a volume of selected poems in English, *A Tribute to Gyula Illyés*. Eds. Thomas Kabdebo and Paul Tabori. Preface by Jean Follain. Occidental Press, Washington, 1968, with a fine translation of “A Sentence about Tyranny” by the Welsh poet Vernon Watkins.) The opportunity now arose, Pándi argued, to include the poem in the anthology. The suggestion met with general approval. But what had Illyés himself to say to this? As his editor, I was eventually assigned to speak to him. “No!” was Illyés’s angrily thundered response. Standing with his back to me at the window of his study overlooking the Danube and looking at the river as he heard me out, he had only turned around once I had finished. He almost exploded with suppressed emotion. “Go and tell those in charge,” he almost shouted, “that their slander that I, as an opportunist cad, had written this poem in October 1956 and simply antedated it, offended and assaulted my honour as a man and poet too much for me to now try and smuggle it back in an anthology, and in this way acknowledge their slanders.”

No more was said about publication, thus there was no way of knowing if the poem could indeed have then been printed, provided Illyés gave his approval. In the following years, especially after the failure of the Prague Spring in 1968, the poem was again “filed away”. In 1972, before sending to press a volume of Illyés’s collected works covering poems written between 1946 and 1968,

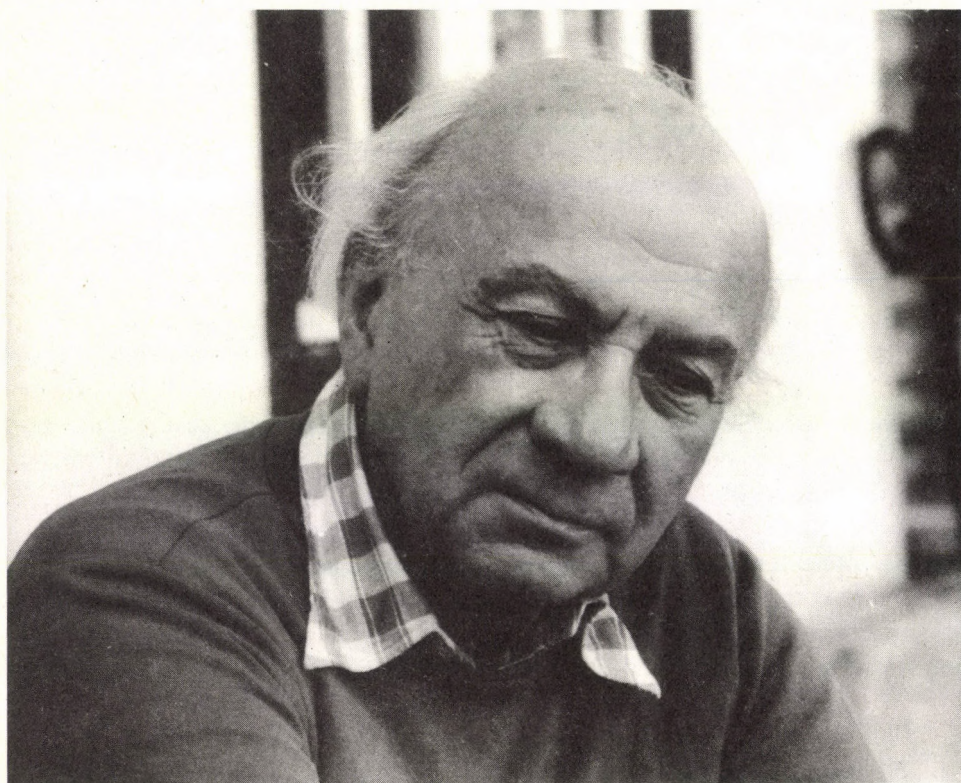
Teremteni (To Create), I brought up the case of the poem again, since this provided another natural opportunity for its publication. (The fact that it would hardly have been possible to publish it is another question altogether.) This conversation also took place in the poet's study, although this time the mood was different. Illyés was stretched out on the couch, half reclining. My question reached him, so it seemed, in an Olympian mood. He may have sensed that there was personal goodwill, and no official intent, behind it. Be that as it may, he was in a story-telling mood and told me about the adventurous story and afterlife of the poem. In particular, he told me that he was not in Budapest on October 23, 1956. His friend and fellow poet Lőrinc Szabó had a poetry reading in Miskolc, his birthplace, and Illyés was there to give the opening address. Because of the events, they had had to stay on in Miskolc for some days. After he had been able to return to Budapest at the end of October, someone on the staff of *Irodalmi Újság* buttonholed him in the Agricultural Museum and asked if he had anything he could submit for publication. Upon his excuse that he had had no manuscripts on him and would have to go home to find something, the journalist said there was no time, they were already past their copy deadline. He added, playing a final trumpcard: "László Németh has given five pieces already." "Upon that I wrote down the poem from memory there and then," Illyés recounted. "This may well have been what helped spread the rumour that I composed it then, since there were quite a few people around who saw me doing it," he added. "In the hurry, I left out four stanzas too, which I've since reinstituted," he went on, laughing, and took from the shelf above his head a bilingual volume of his poetry, *Poezija*, published in the series Biblioteka Orion by the Zagreb publishers Mladost, with the Croatian translations by Enver Colacovic. "Here it is, in this book. I dictated it to him when he visited me to get my permission for publication."

When I asked again whether we could attempt to put the poem into the volume, he reiterated, gently and almost word by word, what he had said in 1965. "Now that it has happened like this and the poem had this fate without my intent, things are best left as they are. It's better this way. In any case, it cannot be lost now, as it has been printed a couple of times, and when we were in America it was also recorded."

Two years after the poet's death, on 31 October 1985, in the small village of Ozora, where he had spent part of his childhood, a newly built school was named after him. The school was opened with an address given by György Aczél, a member of the Political Committee of the HSWP, and the Party's cultural overlord. It was in this address that, for the first time, someone representing the official political line claimed in public that the poem was in fact about "the indisputable historical calling of socialism—the fight for the totality of freedom and against all kinds of dictatorship" and it was not up to Illyés, nor the poem, that

in 1956 it "had become a weapon in the hands of those triggering and inciting violent emotions and of harbingers of hopelessness."

This strange story, with its morbid and grotesque turns and spanning thirty years, is nothing else than that of a show trial that had been initiated against a poem. The suspicion of antedating the poem was probably for the purpose of distracting attention from what the chief cultural commissar tried to "rehabilitate" the poem with in Ozora in 1985—instead of bringing the totality of freedom in fulfilling its historic mission, "existing socialism" had brought into history the totality of oppression. When Catullus spoke out against tyranny he had Caesar in mind, but for whoever is roused by the truth in "A Sentence about Tyranny" it matters not whether the poem was inspired by Caligula or Haynau, the Austrian general responsible for the terror after the 1849 defeat, or whether it was inspired by Stalin or Rákosi. The validity of the truth expressed in the poem is greater and more general than the age it was written in. In its timeless validity, it cannot be affected by a dispute, inspired by the dictatorship, whether the poem was written in 1950 or 1956. The real purpose and meaning of initiating a "scholarly" dispute in the manner of a public prosecution, was precisely to divert attention from the poem's genuine significance. 20



Edit Molnár, MTI

Gyula Illyés in 1977

Gyula Illyés

A Sentence About Tyranny

Egy mondat a zsarnokságról

Translated by George Szirtes

*Where tyranny exists
that tyranny exists
not only in the barrel of the gun
not only in the cells of a prison*

*not just in the interrogation block
or the small hours of the clock
the guard's bark and his fists
the tyranny exists*

*not just in the billowing black fetor
of the closing speech of the prosecutor,
in the "justified use of force"
the prisoners' dull morse*

*not merely in the cool postscript
of the expected verdict
there's tyranny
not just in the crisp military*

*order to "Stand!" and the numb
instruction "Fire!", the roll of the drum,
in the last twitch
of the corpse in the ditch*

*not just in the door half open
and the fearful omen,
the whispered tremor
of the secret rumour*

*the hand that grips,
the finger before the lips,
tyranny is in place
in the iron mask of the face*

*in the clench of the jaw
the wordless O
of pain and its echo
and the tears*

*of silence-breeding fears,
in the surprise
of starting eyes*

*tyranny supplies
the standing ovation, the loud
hurrahs and chanting of the crowd
at the conference, the songs*

*of tyranny, the breasts
that tyranny infests,
the loud unflagging
noise of rhythmic clapping,*

*at the opera, in trumpet cry,
in the uproarious lie
of grandiose statues, of colours,
in galleries,*

*in the frame and the wash,
in the very brush,
not just in the neat snarl
of the midnight car*

*as it waits
outside the gates*

*tyranny permeates
all manners and all states,
its omnipresent eyes more steady
than those of old Nobodaddy,*

*there's tyranny
in the nursery
in father's advice, in his guile,
in your mother's smile*

*in the child's answer
to the perfect stranger;*

*not just in wires with barbs and hooks
not just in rows of books,
but, worse than a barbed wire fence
the slogans devoid of sense*

*whose tyranny supplies
the long goodbyes;
the words of parting,
the will-you-be-home-soon-darling?*

*in the street manners, the meetings
and half-hearted greetings,
the handshakes and the alarm
of the weak hand in your palm,*

*he's there when your loved one's face
turns suddenly to ice
he accompanies you
to tryst or rendezvous*

*not just in the grilling
but in the cooing and the billing,
in your words of love he'll appear
like a dead fly in your beer*

*because even in dreams you're not free
of his eternal company,
in the nuptial bed, in your lust
he covers you like dust*

*because nothing may be caressed
but that which he first blessed,
it is him you cuddle up to
and raise your loving cup to*

*in your plate, in your glass he flows
in your mouth and through your nose
in frost, fog, out or in
he creeps under your skin*

*like an open vent through which
you breathe the foul air of the ditch
and it lingers like drains
or a gas leak at the mains*

*it's tyranny that dogs
your inner monologues,
nothing is your own
once your dreams are known*

*all is changed or lost,
each star a border post
light-strafed and mined; the stars
are spies at window bars,*

*the vast tent's every lamp
lights a labour camp,
come fever, come the bell
it's tyranny sounds the knell,*

*confessor is confession,
he preaches, reads the lesson
he's Church, House and Theatre
the Inquisition;*

*you blink your eyes, you stare
you see him everywhere;
like sickness or memory
he keeps you company;*

*trains rattling down the rail
the clatter of the jail;
in the mountains, by the coast
you are his breathing host;*

*lightning: the sudden noise
of thunder, it's his voice
in the bright electric dart,
the skipping of the heart*

*in moments of calm,
chains of tedium,
in rain that falls an age,
the star-high prison-cage*

*in snow that rises and waits
like a cell, and isolates;
your own dog's faithful eyes
wear his look for disguise,*

*his is the truth, the way
so each succeeding day
is his, each move you make
you do it for his sake;*

*like water, you both follow
the course set and the hollow
ring is closed; that phiz
you see in the mirror is his*

*escape is doomed to failure,
you're both prisoner and gaoler;
he has soaked, corroded in,
he's deep beneath your skin*

*in your kidney, in your fag,
he's in your every rag,
you think: his agile patter
rules both mind and matter*

*you look, but what you see
is his, illusory,
one match is all it takes
and fire consumes the brake*

*you having failed to snuff
the head as it broke off;
his watchfulness extends
to factories, fields and friends*

*and you no longer know or feel
what it is to live, eat meat or bread
to desire or love or spread
your arms wide in appeal;*

*it is the chain slaves wear
that they themselves prepare;
you eat but it's tyranny
grows fat, his are your progeny*

*in tyranny's domain
you are the link in the chain,
you stink of him through and through,
the tyranny IS you;*

*like moles in sunlight we crawl
in pitch darkness, sprawl
and fidget in the closet
as if it were a desert,*

*because where tyranny obtains
everything is vain,
the song itself though fine
is false in every line,*

*for he stands over you
at your grave, and tells you who
you were, your every molecule
his to dispose and rule.*

(1950)

Piroska Szántó

The Island

A Memoir

"Und wir fahren gegen Engelland!"

German soldiers' song from the Second World War

My pink-and-grey dress will do, but the hat! They say a hat's a must—whoever heard of such a thing—in high summer, under socialism! I window-shop elatedly in the inner city—good thing that I happen to live there—and dozens of acquaintances, women and girls come up to me to whisper in my ear, "Did you get an invitation too?"—To which I reply, "And haven't you got a hat either? Because I haven't." A fur-cap for the winter, yes, and not a Russian *ushanka* with ear-flaps, thank goodness, which is what the zealots wear; out of pure cussedness I wear a white fur-cap, and in the summer a beret I can slip into my pocket, or a colourful peasant scarf rolled up and tied at the nape of the neck. Loden coats have just gone out of fashion, all the identical clothes stores have to offer are shapeless brownish raincoats—short, waistless overcoats are coming in for those ladies of fashion who can boast recently travelled relatives. I do own a pair of nylon stockings (tights are as yet unheard of here) and a pair of high-heeled shoes of venerable age, so far so good, but some more knowledgeable ladies are saying that gloves are a must too if the dress is short-sleeved, which mine is, which means long gloves, how ghastly. And as I really mustn't disgrace Pista, I do manage to unearth a little silvery-grey pancake to fit between my chignon and my left eye. I've never spent so much time shopping for clothes in my life before, true, I've never been to a garden party either, but now I've got the gloves too, and Pista's dark grey cotton lustre suit (cut down from my father-in-law's former summer best) and the blue tie with the white polka dots is really magnificent, right, now we're all set to go and celebrate the Queen's Birthday at the British Minister's residence.

Piroska Szántó

*is a painter and illustrator as well as
the author of a volume of memoirs.*

*She is the widow of the poet István Vas,
with whom she travelled to England on a
British Government invitation in 1959.*

Ordinarily, Pista doesn't like getting mail; God knows why, but that's the way it is, whether it is he who picks up the letters, or whether it's me who hands them over to him, he always sighs and says: "Oh dear." And

tears them open with nervous fingers, instead of neatly slitting them open the way it should be done. No way! But now he stares amazed at a sheet of paper folded lengthwise, and, almost stammering with excitement, can't say more than "Look!!!"

"In the name of Her Majesty? What on earth?!" I yell. We stare at each other dumbfounded, it just can't be true. But it is. In consideration of the large quantities of English literature he has translated, the GOVERNMENT extends its cordial invitation to Pista and his wife to spend two weeks in England, and would he be kind enough to call on Mr Sandhurst, the cultural attaché at the British Legation any morning between 10 and 12 a.m. to discuss further details.

Hahaha. Those lords on the island have got to be joking. One strolls into the British Legation, talks things over, goes to the Hungarian National Bank, changes a pile of forints into pounds, then gets on the plane, just like that, and gets off in England.

Don't the poor things know that man is not a brute beast, but a publicly administered being? First he must inform the proper authorities of his extraordinary intention, this being the Board of Directors of the Publishing House in Pista's case, and the party secretary of the Association of Artists in mine. Our request will then be "forwarded to the administrative board", and with their official sanction will be "submitted for approval" to the Ministry of Culture. Which will, if it isn't one of its off days, decide that the subject may travel. The subject will then apply to the National Bank, which will then grant the applicant its usual five, that is five dollars per head—since he is not travelling in an official capacity, but as an invited guest, who will obviously be living in clover, and should he be wanting to heed the call of nature in a private capacity, it won't cost him more than a penny; this, as it later turned out, was exactly right—what else could he spend all that money on, abroad?

Wonder of wonders, we passed the official screening, save for one last hurdle, the Ministry of Culture. Comrade Aczél, the Deputy Minister, will see Pista on the sixteenth at half past two. Our friends are delirious with heartfelt joy and equally heartfelt jealousy, no Hungarian writer has ever received an invitation of the kind; Csombor Szepsi and Miklós Bethlen's journey to England in the seventeenth century, even the prewar British scholarships for Hungarians aren't worth tuppence compared to this. England herself invites Pista Vas from Pest—what an honour!—even Pista's mother, prone to sniff at everything, can't find anything to say but:

"What are you going to put on to call on the Queen? You'll fall flat on your face in tails for sure. I don't doubt but you'll be drinking too."

Pista roars, the special roar he reserves for his mother.

"It isn't Buckingham Palace I've been invited to, it's England—do you understand? And I'm not a waiter, nor a diplomat—tails! Why not a hussar's braided tunic while you're at it?"

"You had better learn to courtsey"—warns Mrs Vas, just in case.

With one knee practically touching the ground I drop her a proper courtly curtsey (which I learnt from Thackeray, not in dancing school at Félégyháza), but Mrs Vas is invincible.

"And don't you wear a low-cut dress, those bony shoulders of yours aren't fit to be flashed around."

She was right. I am too thin and terribly tired; this year, 1958, was really too much, and it's far from being over yet. Let us go, let us go to Szentendre, to be among our freshly planted trees and the rank grass grown shoulder-high, there are no flowers yet except for the large purple trumpets of the morning glory twined around the verandah for shade, but it is impossible to bear this poor, crushed city, our Budapest still living in constant fear of arrests, the daily flood of dreadful news, we know nothing about our friends in prison and information about those who have managed to get out of the country is scarce and hard to come by.

It is June, the Queen's Birthday, the day of the garden party. There is a police cordon around the minister's residence, they take a good long look at every arrival—or is this the way things are normally done? I have no idea, I've never been to a "garden party". Miklós Hubay's sceptical remark would appear to be apposite here: "The majority of those present will in all probability be leaving in a big, black, windowless bus".

A green lawn mottled with a great many people, uniforms, chests resplendent with medals, soldierly Scotsmen in kilts and sporrans with handsome bony knees, Hindu saris, yellow, brown and black faces, turbans and come off it Piroska! A fez? in 1958?, occasionally a long Oriental robe ("aba", Maugham whispers within me) and those representatives of Hungarian literature who are at liberty still. Waiters flit swift-footed on the green lawn into which the ladies' high heels sink up to the hilt, and very few of those present turn out to be abstainers, grabbing thirstily at the glasses of whisky pushed under their noses, the whisky is luckily well-watered, but nonetheless produces an elemental—perhaps psychic—effect upon a couple of close friends of ours, two poets who, upon leaving, turn to avail themselves of the side wall of the residence with unconstrained simplicity, not in full view of those present, luckily, on that side the shrubbery screens the garden. I speak very little English, but I understand enough to make out that everyone is talking but no one is saying anything. Our hosts are making a tremendous effort to achieve broken Hungarian, broken I said? crushed is the better word though "how do you do" and "another glass" is as far as they get; no farther, I suppose, than we get in English. English doesn't come easily to us. The curious thing is, I've only just realized that Russian was easier to learn. I find to my surprise that English faces are either pink-and-white or like tallow-candles; the women's dresses are pretty and to

our eyes unbelievably fashionable, but somehow they do not wear them well. There are one or two exceptions of course, eyed covetously by the women—as well as by the men. But I am proud to see how chic the Hungarian women look in their outmoded rags. We are all without exception hatted, but it seems we were wrong in thinking them compulsory, for not every English lady is wearing one. I am paid an unforgettable compliment by a bushy-whiskered, likeable man: “How you are charming.” It turns out he is a professor, an orientalist and so “I am easier Hungarian.” The minister not being present, a Mr Street does duty for him.

“Any relation of Della Street?” I ask, upon which he laughs his head off.

“Are Hungarian ladies so well-read then?”

“No, of course not,” I stammer, “but they’ve all heard of Mr Perry Mason.”

Well, that’s over, I chuck the hat on top of the winter wardrobe. And we rush back to Szentendre to catch our breaths. Aczél’s secretary has again advised us that he is expecting Pista at the Ministry at half past one in the afternoon in two days’ time with his letter of invitation.

“I shan’t go back to the office when I’m through,” Pista calls back from the door, “I’ll come straight home, do we need anything, what shall I get, some milk?”

The afternoon is dragging on and still he doesn’t come. It is getting dark, too, though the days are long. Today it’s June 16th, for almost a week they’ll be getting longer still. It’s night-time and still Pista hasn’t come. There can only be one possible explanation. A great many writers are in prison. And then bang, out of the blue comes an invitation to go to England, but I musn’t think of that. What the hell else can I think of? And then a hundred-ton bomb explodes in my chest and I sprawl across the bed. I don’t know how much time passes but suddenly Pista is there, standing in front of me, drunk, sobbing, shaking his fist at the sky, at God, at the world—I’ve never seen him like this.

On this June 16th they have executed Imre Nagy.

A year went by before we could leave for England, I had to get over my heart-attack, and there were the insolences of the various offices to be endured.

A trip to England after years like this, dear God. Pista is walking about in a daze, it was 1947, twelve years ago that he last travelled abroad, he is pouring out poems, blissful, joyous. Despite the fact that Aczél, when he finally signed the authorization, rapped out a last admonishment: “Aren’t you afraid you might end up burying Piroska at sea? Romantic fools that you are, perhaps it would make you happy that it has to happen there, if it has to happen.”

Of course. It would certainly make me happy. For a while there Fate was looking the other way, true, true, but just wait and see. Now there’s just the fear and the awful feeling that this thin girl here with the eternal cigarette dangling from her lips is now a portly, cautious lady who daren’t smoke and whose doc-

tor has absolutely forbidden air travel however hard we plead, he simply won't accept responsibility. At every frontier we cross we are stared at, we are travelling on a red passport, it is May 1959.

A sleeping-car and Pista's worried face looking down from the upper bunk: "How do you feel? Are you alright? How's your pulse?" Morning finds us in Amiens, French railwaymen swing their lamps and hammer in exactly the same way that the Hungarians do, and the tricolour glimmers through the grey train dawn. Amiens, why is it so familiar? Dumas, of course. Calais! Everything calls to mind the war or some novel. This is where the Channel is the narrowest, where the Allied landing was expected, and how they were expected! Then comes the ferry. On the ferry, we are guests already, England's guests. Back home we were kept in dreadful awe of the Immigration Officer who, if he so chooses, could decide not to let us in, to send us back, the Island stands on the defensive. But he brings me a deckchair, and makes a point of telling the waiter that we are England's Hungarian guests, and we wolf down our five o'clock tea—beneath the densely black sky the ship pitching and tossing on the grey waves is without a doubt carrying us to the Island of the Blessed from *Tristan*, and the cliffs of Dover are white, is everything true, then, everything I dreamed of during this last year spent half in, half out of hospital, are we really going to get there? Yes. At Dover one of the ferry-boat's officers hands us over to the train guard or the station-master or the customs officer, I'm not sure which, all I know is he's in a railwayman's uniform. "How was our crossing?" he inquires, "Are we good sailors? They say the sea was "rough" today. Would we like something to drink?" "Only if you'll join us," says Pista, and the man stares at him open-mouthed in wonder, naturally I can't understand a word of what he's saying, not because he's speaking too fast but because he mumbles so, a tray appears with a plate of biscuits and a huge pot of tea and he really does join us, knocking back cup after cup into that funny rabbit's face of his. A beautiful green train runs along with us for a while across a beautiful green field, the houses seem to have sprouted fingers reaching towards the sky, innumerable pink or brown chimneys jut from the roof-tops of rock-grey or reddish-brown houses, and white sheep doze in the green field like so many heaps of snow, not one would stir an inch, not for the world. It is drizzling, but somehow in a friendly way. "God, if England is this green, how green must Ireland be," sighs Pista the insatiable.

We arrive at Victoria and have barely clambered off the train when a blonde lady with a large sheet of paper in her hands saying Mr and Mrs Vas from Budapest starts waving to us vehemently. She is to be our guide (a nursemaid assigned to foolish foreigners). She is Hungarian by birth, a German-speaking angel who knows two words of Hungarian, of which she is very proud, remembering them from her childhood; one is "Margitka", the other is "Törpe", the first being her own name, the second her pony's. She has been living in England

from the age of six, and is an English-German guide. I discover with wonder that Victoria Station is undamaged, there is not a single hole to be seen either in its roof, or in its walls, even its glass panes are intact, and there are a great many porters bustling about, and plenty of those tricycle-like things used to transport luggage, enough to go around, and no one pushes or shoves, fascinating. We are whisked through customs, though they make no end of a fuss with the man before us returning home from India; he couldn't possibly look more English, yet is practically made to strip. The first thing that enchants us is the taxi. Suitable for cabin trunks, no doubt, but if the need arose you could fit a baby elephant into it, it is so roomy, there is a jump seat, and the taxi-driver doesn't grumble, doesn't try to cheat us, doesn't try to make out he doesn't understand where we want to go, and the taxi is black. Our hotel is the St. Ermin, near Green Park—who could he be? We have a suite: a sitting-room, a bedroom, a red bathroom for me, a green one for Pista, they wouldn't have us squabble over who should get the bathroom first for the world. Our driver, a woman, has beautiful gloves, leather on the underside, webbing on top, I've never seen anything like it. She announces that she will drive us every other day, her fellow-driver is a woman too, a very nice lady, they are to take us everywhere according to the schedule, and, naturally, anywhere else we may wish to go, of course. But it is the breakfast-room that captivates me more than anything else. For as generous as the Government has proved to be in matters of transport and accomodation, it has shown itself extremely thrifty as regards food. For my invitation as a wife runs to "bed and breakfast" only. Pista gets lunch and dinner wherever he's taken—and he's taken every day to broadcasting studios, to the Houses of Parliament, to universities, to writers' meetings, and I can't always go with him. What happens is, the day before, Roger, Margitka's replacement, or Margitka herself hands over an appointment slip: such and such an institution is expecting Mr Vas, the car will be waiting in front of the hotel at twenty past ten with the guide of the day. On sightseeing tours and trips to the country and the sea, the driver takes Mrs Vas too.

In short, the breakfast-room holds at least a hundred tables, and every wall is adorned with huge ships (frescoes of course) heading for the most wonderful regions of the Empire across blue seas, atop frothed-up waves. And there is a menu to choose from even at breakfast, and an electric toaster on every table, and if we run out of toast I just have to glance up at the waiter, and he brings us another, full of fresh toast without my having to say a word. Toast is cut into triangles here. Fruit juice, porridge, cornflakes, eggs prepared four different ways, butter, honey, marmelade, jam, and fresh fruit. There are hot dishes warming on a special grill, I warily decide not to sample them. I try to eat enough to last me through the day but this, sadly, is impossible. For we cannot get through a single breakfast undisturbed. The waiter winding his way among

the tables with his head bowed keeps repeating in a whisper, as if to himself, for he wouldn't disturb the other guests for the world: four, four, seven. There are no telephones in the rooms, a guest is entitled to privacy once he's retired to his room, isn't he, right, so four special telephone boxes have been set up in the hall, two for calls abroad. Four, four, seven is our room number, and the calls are from our expatriate compatriots, the poor things haven't had any news from home for two and a half years. And now they want to see us, want to know everything, want to meet us at once, right away, of course it's understandable, but does it have to be during breakfast? For while we are on the phone, the waiters think we've finished and clear the table, breakfast is served until ten o'clock only. At ten twenty the car comes for Pista, the driver tells us what time she'll be bringing him back, usually late in the afternoon, and until then I am free to roam around London alone to my heart's content. On foot, of course, I cannot waste the tremendous amount of money we've been granted. Thanks to my sheepdog's instincts I can find my way around London splendidly, though I can't count on the Thames, there is no left bank, right bank here, the river snakes and coils like the braid on a hussar's dolman. But I have a good sense of direction, and though the sun isn't out, it does glimmer through the fine mist of rain, enough to tell north from south. The St. Ermin for example lies west of the river bank. So I roam the streets and I'm hungry.

Not far from the hotel I come upon a little market, open till noon, surprisingly clean and practically deserted. Fruit, vegetables, several kinds I've never seen before among them, a fish-and-chips shop. And the vendor doesn't say a word, wouldn't dream of forcing his wares on you, and the women vendors all wear clean white aprons, but maybe it's just this neighbourhood that's special. And then again a surge of joy: stuck into the piles of fruit are little black markers with the prices written in chalk and a big d. I ask for a pound of bananas, because they seem lowest in price, the marker says 2 1/2d. And suddenly I almost collapse onto the golden heap. Good God, of course: denarius. So they came here, the Romans came here too, of course they did, setting out from Italy they traversed the land of the Alemanni, and Gaul, boarded a ship and crossed "La Manche", and disembarked in Britannia, Londinium and the Bretons and the Britons and the Picts, what a strange figure the Legions must have cut in their caligas and their tunics in this climate, how they must have wondered at this grey-green land. And the denarius is the only memento of those times (why not the sestertius as well?), and the duodecimal system, which I soon find myself at home in, to Pista's genuine surprise, it is I who pay and I who count, it is more fascinating than the boring decimal system which I am always in a muddle over, pounds, shillings, half-crowns and pennies are much more interesting. Denarius. The thought to change denarius into pence never entered their heads, everyone knows that "d" stands for pence, so why should they write "p" instead? If I remember my Latin authors right, the Britons used to paint them-

selves blue before going to battle—that's one custom they've left off at least. Another thing I remember is that there was no need to abolish serfdom in England. It sort of petered out by itself, without their really noticing exactly when. That they cut off their kings' heads when they weren't pleased with them may have had something to do with the matter. Funny people (which is what they say about us).

They hand me over the pound of bananas in a pale brown paper bag so smooth that many Hungarian painters would turn cartwheels for joy if they could work with material of such quality. I go back to the hotel with my spoils, it is lunchtime for the English, and I sit down in one of the wonderfully comfortable armchairs in our bedroom and reverently begin to peel a banana, which is the cheapest, most ordinary fruit here, but back home is practically unknown to the younger generation.

And now a key rattles in the lock, the door opens. The only reason why I don't choke on my mouthful is because in my alarm I clenched my fist and squashed into a pulp the banana I was just getting ready to bite into.

The maid who opens the door—her crisp cotton uniform and lace cap are relics of Miss Marple's youthful days—is so taken by surprise she cannot move; she would bolt if she could, but she can't just turn her back on a guest, even if the guest in question is a pariah gorging herself on bananas at midday with all the obvious signs of a guilty conscience. So she backs to the door, bleating:

"Ma'am ...Ma'am, ma'am ...sorry, ma'am."

Shame envelops me like a shroud. The shame of poverty that is not easily cast off. I can only hope that the maid will think I'm a vegetarian, or on a diet or something, and that is why I did not go down to the restaurant, oh God, what shame I've brought upon you, beloved country of mine, as if someone were to munch plums out of a soggy paper bag in the Ritz. A fine opinion she'll have now of us poor barbarians, gorging in secret, but it's my fault, I should have known that housemaids and chambermaids would have keys to all the rooms.

Would have keys and use them.

The door opens again and an enormous tray advances into the room, a silver tray, or at least something very like it, a huge pot of tea, bread-and-butter, tea-cakes, scones or muffins and two green apples. The maid of the previous incident can hardly be seen behind it, her round face is all smiles, I have no idea what my own face looks like, it takes an immense effort to hold back the tears.

"Your tea, ma'am," she says, and backs out of the room with her eyes lowered, by the time I jump up to run after her there is only the hum of the lift to signal her passing.

I tell Pista returning home from the BBC about the godsent tea and he relates how he was dragged through an intricate maze of technical equipment and working processes, of which he understood not a thing (at home, still only party secretaries and ministers own television sets). In the dining hall a dozen profes-

sors took him under their wing, one of them was bent on telling him the history of England in a nutshell, and half-way through, speaking of a king, the name of his queen slipped his memory for a moment.

"His queen...er...", he said, irritably snapping his fingers.

"Henrietta?" said the ever polite Pista softly, helping him out, and the professor stared at him, and at once began to vaunt the formidable knowledge of Hungarian writers in general, and Mr Vas in particular. So amends were made for my gaffe, our country's honour was restored, thank God. For the rest, the lunch was terrible according to Pista, the room was packed with the professors' umbrellas, but never mind, tomorrow we'd be going to Oxford together and, he added hesitantly, it wouldn't be a bad idea if you checked to see whether the money you're expecting from Besnyő in America has arrived yet, I would so like to buy at least one book in Oxford. After all, you know...

The bank where my old friend Magda Besnyő, now living in America, was supposed to send me fifty dollars is on the Haymarket. No, the money hasn't arrived yet.

"Are you certain the sum was sent?" asks the totally indifferent, pasty-faced clerk, leaning on the table boorishly and leafing through my passport.

"It is a gift from a friend," I mutter, "she wrote that she was sending it to the Haymarket branch of bank."

"I will pay out the sum," said the man, fiddling with my passport, "on your responsibility. If it doesn't arrive during your stay, you must pay it back. Or else you will not be admitted to this country again. I repeat, the sum will be paid out to you on your own responsibility."

Great Heavens. This is something I have not felt for a long time: that I am not only a human being who can be held responsible for what I say, but also a person whose word can be trusted. It was about time. I am in England. Magna Charta.

"Serves you right for wanting to travel," a friend of a friend said to me laughing, back in Budapest before we left, and dumped a huge suitcase before me, "I know it's heavy but it shan't be you who has to carry it. I left some money with the person you're to hand it to two years ago, and I've written and told her you're coming and that she's to help you, give you some of what she owes me, I've told her to call on you. Because you aren't going to get far on the five dollars the State's given you, are you now?"

"Four, four, seven," the waiter whispers at breakfast, and in the afternoon Barbara arrives with an armful of pink roses, seizes the suitcase, yes, of course she'll take it to whoever, gladly. Money? Give me money? Whatever gave me that idea? I can't mean it seriously. Am I really such a cheat, such a liar? The lady never left any money with her, not a penny. Aren't I ashamed of myself? England's a constitutional state, not a communist flock of sheep.

Dumbfounded, I stammer that it was Ilonka who said... that it was she who sent the suitcase, why should I lie, how can she think...

"Hungarians are capable of anything," Barbara hisses, and what can I do but burst out laughing.

"You're right, Borcsa, you're so right. You're Hungarian too, I can see that. And now you'd better go away. Go on, scat."

A thousand messages, a thousand commissions, from batteries to pills and oh, just a quarter pound of tea, Ridgeway and Earl Grey, darling. And, God bless you, will you take my daughter's confirmation necklace and her favourite pullover, hardly any weight at all, you'll take it, won't you? And bring me a box of corn-pads from Scholl's, it won't cost you more than a couple of pennies. A pair of scissors for me! Go to Selfridges, they've got those new ball-point pens, you know...

"My Gyuri loves my cheese straws, you'll take this box for me, won't you? Just phone him and he'll come and pick it up at your hotel, he lives a good distance away, poor dear. He adores them you know, and no one can make them like his mother makes."

Gyurika was five years old the last time I saw him, which was in a grocery shop on Szent István körút where I was queueing up for eggs; he bit my leg. "He sometimes likes to pretend that he's a dog," smiled his mother, standing next to me in the queue. How could I refuse the mother of this expatriate make-believe dog, the wife of a well-liked, kindly and prolific writer of fiction besides, beseechingly holding out a shoe-box filled with cheese straws? And now here is Gyurika, and to my eyes he hasn't changed much since his dog days.

"For Heaven's sake. Isn't that just like her," he growls, and seems totally unmoved, doesn't sample a single cheese straw as he tears open the carefully wrapped and tied box, dumps the contents on our table, and fishes out a Herend porcelain figurine from the depths of the pyramid. "Thanks," he says offhandedly, stuffing it in his pocket, and is already out of the room, without a backward glance at the pile of cheese straws. His mother made no mention of the figurine, but a section from the pamphlet we were given at the mission certainly did: the one that listed the things we weren't allowed to take into the country. Animals, flowers, seeds, Herend porcelain and spirits. And if they had found it while we were coming through the customs? I did trick England after all, the pasty-faced man at the bank should never have trusted me. (The money naturally arrived three days later.) I feel terribly ashamed of myself, for various reasons, and not just on that one occasion. László Cs. Szabó will have a few things to say on the subject. Csé, the legendary Csé, now working for the BBC's Hungarian Section and whom we are to meet on the corner of Regent Street and Picadilly. Pista and he rush over to each other and hug each other so hard that Margitka, English education or no, keeps having to brush away the tears with the back of her hand, though it is in Hungarian that Csé says haltingly, almost stammering:

"Did you come straight from home? Did you?" It is twelve years since he left, but we will not speak of that now.

"You'll have dinner with us the day after tomorrow, we'll talk then, I just wanted to see you. You'll be going to Oxford tomorrow, a friend of mine will be expecting you, a professor, he's translating Radnóti, give him all the help you can."

In Oxford we are greeted by a genuine English wind, the grey wind that first heralded itself on the ship, salty and rough, but with the smell of fresh rain about it. Oxford sways in the wind, the little plaid duffel-bags which we haven't seen in Hungary yet swing from people's shoulders, and bicycles seem to be the most popular form of travel, the black gowns of students and dons flutter and flap as they cycle merrily from hall to hall (where the pervading smell is that of mutton) through dense clouds of fragrance exhaled by the flowers climbing up the walls. Scent and smell intermingle at the foot of the timbered houses where the flowers cling to the snow-white walls in clusters to shelter from the wind. The Shakespeare Hotel must be terribly expensive, every room has been given a name from Shakespeare, I am a little sad that ours is called Ninny's tomb, but it's a lovers' trysting place, you know, says Pista to console me. All the same, I'd much rather live in Puck. Professor T., who greets us with a stentorian "Good day to you, how do you like it here", really does speak Hungarian, and is a real character besides. First and foremost he is all brown. His eyes, his hair, even his face, and he speaks Hungarian in a marvellous way, strangely enough, even his accent is good.

"Your name what, Mrs. Vas?"

"Piroska," I reply. "Scarlett, Priscilla, I don't know, it's very Hungarian."

"Piroska?" His pronunciation is perfect. "Daughter to your very ancient and sainted king László. Mine is Godofred," he says proudly.

So far so good, Godofred. What a hopeless business it is, language, translation. Awful. Still, we knuckle down to untangling Radnóti during a fairy-tale supper in a terribly expensive restaurant where we are his guests. Not a whiff of mutton. I am once again amazed by the English custom of eating buttered rolls before a meal—in passing as it were, between the aperitif and the soup. A plate of rolls is set by every place, like the salt-cellar and the pepper-mill and the toothpicks.

And now, suddenly, here he is in Oxford, Miklós Radnóti, his lean face, his great deer's eyes: an Oxford don's black gown flapping behind him as he walks would suit him well. Because naturally Godofred wants to know everything. And Pista speaks of him so willingly—tears welling up in his eyes at times—how happy Miklós would be! Godofred asks all the right questions, does not ask the wrong ones, and listens attentively, in a way that couldn't be improved upon. And we are just wrestling—I keep feeling, to no avail—for he can't possibly understand, how could he, not the whole of it, nor that moment of Miklós stopping in the doorway, rubbing my cat's head, and saying I'm not coming in, I just came to say goodbye, and I've a lot of calls to make still.

Why didn't Godofred ask us up to his flat, it would be easier to work there, he's got to have a Hungarian as well as an English dictionary—or is it that his home is his castle? Rather than have us intrude upon the privacy of his home, he prefers to stand us an expensive supper in a restaurant. But it seems he realizes it is impossible to work properly while eating.

"Coffee in room," he says, and suddenly we are transported back into Dickens' and Thackeray's time: a fire is burning in the hearth of the small parlour, it is cold for May, what the English call a blackthorn winter as it turns out. The waiter serves what they call coffee in this, the private room, and some kind of wine to the gentlemen. I recognize the signs of sincere appreciation on Pista's face, but do not ask for a taste.

"The moon is so round today." I eagerly try to explain that "round" in this case does not mean "round as a ball" as he thinks, and what he meant by "steep road", there's nothing for it but to draw, to mime, to find synonyms, "worming its way" causes great difficulties—I am not sure whether the worm I am drawing, worming its way, does the same thing in English, it may do something quite different, inches its way perhaps, but finally we connect, as Pista explains and I draw he suddenly understands, his face lights up.

"I understand, a subtle, unusual word is, and taken from nature, yes? I wish to be loyal."

"Me too," says Pista, and his eyes are full of tears again. It is late at night by the time we are finished, Godofred drives us back to the hotel in a wonderful car—I have no idea whether it's an ancient model or the very latest—and shakes and shakes Pista's hand, and says: "Good night, duchess, good night, poet."

We go to bed in Ninny's tomb and have a good cry over Miklós.

I am not a good liar even in Hungarian, in English lying is absolutely beyond me. So the next day at breakfast, when Godofred comes to say goodbye with two female orientalist in tow who wish to hear Hungarian spoken, I succeed in making a name for myself as a wit. I recite them some Weöres, Arany, a little Jékely and Juhász, and some prose that I happen to know by heart, a passage from Tömörkény.

"Will the Doctor recite for us too?" they ask, it seems they daren't turn to him directly with their plea.

"My husband isn't a doctor," I reply, and they stare at me.

"Oh, yes, of course, he's a professor, isn't he, sorry!"

"He isn't a professor and he isn't a doctor, he never went to university, he hasn't got a degree, just call him by his name, Jane dear! "

Both ladies burst out laughing, one of them, the prettier one laughs so hard she knocks over her coffee-cup, luckily it's empty.

"Oh, what a wonderful sense of humour you have, dear Mrs. Vas! Never went to university, indeed! Why, he was speaking to me in French just now, and the professor says he has translated four Shakespeare plays, and Racine, and

Goethe—oh, dear, you continentals are so different, so funny, so sweet, so very different! Hasn't got a degree! Great!"

I look to Godofred to discover which of us is the idiot around here, because it certainly isn't him.

"It was just a joke," he says, turning to the ladies. "Mrs. Vas has a wonderful sense of humour."

What am I to do? Three days later in Cambridge a loud burst of laughter greets me:

"Oh, poor Mr. Vas, we know, we know, you never even went to school. You don't know how to read or write, your wife signs your name for you. And what a sense of humour she has! Up till now all we knew about Hungarians was that they are a heroic people, brave enough to go for the Soviet army bare-handed—but that they are like this—wonderful! We hope you are having a good time in England."

This is too much even for me; I am tempted to try my luck further.

"Moreover, there are four different types of finch living in Hungary," I say laughing, and realize to my astonishment that this time they take me at my word.

"Really? Our bird-lovers will be very interested to hear about that," nods the host professor from Cambridge, and takes us under his wing. That very night, Pista writes his "Cambridge Elegy". Of course the poem is about Sárospatak and the defeat of every Hungarian conspiracy and revolt, it is a lament, an elegy for our imprisoned friends, Déry, Zelk and the others. Yes, we are having a good time in Cambridge, England.

Not so in Hungary—for that is what the Hungarian legation is for us here. "You must report to the legation whatever happens," Aczél pressed, and we do, of course, first by telephone, but when we get there at the appointed time, we just stare at each other and at the boarded-up windows and door of the building. What's happening here?

"They keep breaking the windows," explains the minister, who opens the padlocked door in person, "We've moved down to the basement, can't get any British staff, we're very short-handed. What do you want?"

Who'd have believed it? We've come upon a besieged castle. I should not like to be in comrade Sz.'s shoes, but we haven't much in common and are hard put to make conversation with him in the half hour that we spend in the basement sipping tea. His wife brings in the tea, I get up to help but she forestalls me with a wry smile—such is life these days, I've become used to it. Comrade Sz. keeps pumping us, trying to find out what we want from him, though we've told him twice that we don't want anything, thank you very much, we came because we were told to come, back home. We are not defectors but visitors, come for a two weeks' stay at the invitation of the British government, you can see he only half-believes what we are telling him, perhaps he's afraid we mean to stay on?

Hasn't he been informed about what has been happening back home? Impossible. And, as you never can tell what makes a person tick, neither of us utters the word "revolution" nor "counter-revolution"—how long has he had this post anyway? Pista is daring enough to ask, but comrade Sz. is a diplomat.

"Quite a while," he says. We do not ask any more questions, thank him for the tea, and are preparing to leave when he pronounces a sentence that can in no way be fitted under a diplomatic heading, for he has undoubtedly received all our personal data.

"Where do you live in Budapest?"

"Opposite the University Church, at number 10, Eötvös Loránd utca, fourth floor, door number 5."

"You must have been in the thick of it, then."

"Yes, we were," is all Pista says, soft-voiced but hard, and looks back for a moment at comrade Sz., who is locking the door to Hungary behind us, padlock and key in hand.

And now we are on our way to Hungary again, to the Cs. Szabós for supper. His flat is as crammed full of Hungarian and English books as his flat in Budapest used to be. An old and a new map of Hungary on the wall, and a separate map of Budapest, and he hangs the homespun haversack full of gingerbread that I brought with me as a present beside them straightaway. I can see he is pleased with it and his wife embraces me.

"It'll be on your shoulder when you come home," I say in a whisper, because she motions me to hush as Csé turns away, twisting and twining the fringed trimming of the sack between his fingers.

"Talk, talk!" presses Csé as we sit down to eat in the downstairs sitting room. "Tell me everything, the good and the bad, we know about who's in prison but information comes indirectly and it can't be checked."

Well, the conversation isn't exactly cheering, though the truth is this is the first time since 1957 that we are able to speak freely to someone who wasn't in the thick of it. I am sitting with my back to the door, and after a time, Csé suddenly steps behind me and gently takes hold of my head with both hands.

"Dear, you don't realize, do you, that you automatically keep turning your head to look behind you as you talk? It's become a habit, I suppose. But for God's sake, you needn't do it here, there's nothing to be afraid of, there's no one to eavesdrop on you."

No doubt about it, Csé is somebody here, he has found his niche, he is writing and publishing too (in Hungarian, of course); the woman he loves followed him abroad, they are together, living well and happily, and yet this meeting is a bit like when the poor relation asks the rich relation to dinner, and it may sound strange but it's the truth, we are the rich relations. For, though I may stare yearningly at the treasures of London, the unimaginable, inconceivably sumptu-

ous shop windows and Csé's wife's tartan skirt and Csé's superb tweed jacket, it is we who are the rich relations, because in ten days' time we shall be home, in Budapest. But until then London is ours, from the church service in Westminster Abbey to the orchids in Kew Gardens and the ducklings and other beautiful birds in the parks. Rhododendra, massed in great banks of purple, line the road leading to Canterbury—to Caunterbury they wende, says Pista; in Brighton I fill my pockets with grey pebbles with holes in them that remind me of Henry Moore because of the holes, and acknowledge to myself that Dobbin must have been charitable indeed if he undertook to break in upon the Osbornes on their honeymoon. He came by post-chaise, of course, and put up at the bathing establishment that stands today, though modernized, like Chaucer's birthplace, which is still there, in the same street, under the same number, no one thought to rename the street after a present-day celebrity or another poet. I can secretly touch the Rosetta Stone and the flat toes of the Assyrian kings in the British Museum. And I can wait on a bench in Russell Square, while Pista is sitting upstairs at Faber's, conversing with T.S. Eliot. But that is another story, as Kipling, my old favourite, says in *The Jungle Book*.

Hegyeshalom, the Hungarian border. The train is a dirty grey tin box. It is suddenly cold. Besides us there are only two Germans or at least German-speaking, unattractive, elderly ladies travelling in the compartment. The younger one explains in an earnest and terribly loud voice that she had "got cold feet" at Schwechat, just outside Vienna, already, and that this Hungarian train, it really is the limit! True that there is only a 25 watt light-bulb blinking on the ceiling and the train is unheated, Pista and I huddle together for warmth, the differences are striking after two weeks of being mollicoddled in England. The train lurches and jolts, rattling and clattering as if it were going to fall to pieces at any moment, the stations are deserted and dark, two hours before we reach home, two long hours from the border to the city. The spring night is dark and dismally cold. And now the door of the compartment creaks open, a sleepy, pale little waitress stumbles in with a tatty tray slippery with all the slopped-out beverages, wet glasses, and a couple of bottles rattle upon it.

"Wine, beer, or brandy," calls out the girl in a sing-song voice, not even looking up as she walks between the seats, staggering and crossly trying to keep her balance.

"Oh, goodness," Pista bursts out, "That's made me feel I'm really home, that this is the only place where I can live. The music of that sentence, the rise and the fall at the end!"

Outside, the lights are multiplying. Budapest. 🍷

Translated by Eszter Molnár

Seeing Bartók Clear

Interview with László Somfai, Head of the Budapest Bartók Archives

Béla Bartók died fifty years ago, on 26 September 1945, in New York. Paradoxically, his death led to a favourable turn in his standing both at home and abroad. Closing his 1981 book on Bartók, Tibor Tallián gave an unsparing explanation for the change in Hungary: "His country, which in his lifetime rarely showed itself worthy of him, upon his death made the composer and his work into a legend desiring by this to show itself as the true heir of his estate."

How and why did this Bartók legend evolve?

Even without looking for political implications, it is obvious that all the many Bartók anniversaries and the to-do the state made about them were useful because they stressed the worth of music, placing it near the top of the social scale of values (at least for the time of the festivities) and Bartók could be a source of pride for the Hungarian arts. In the years when international contacts were fairly limited, we could thank Bartók as a symbol that festivals and competitions were attended by visiting artists and scholars who, had it not been for Bartók, presumably would never have dreamt of coming to Hungary. Nonetheless, there is a considerable difference between the celebrations before 1956 and those in the years of relative relaxation. The latter were different both from

the aspect of performance and musicology. Most of the material of the musicological conferences tied to various Bartók anniversaries has been published, edited by the great names of Hungarian musicology, Bence Szabolcsi, Dénes Bartha and József Ujfalussy. Surveying it years later, it is obvious that these volumes are nothing to be ashamed of. They have become standard works in both the Hungarian and international literature on Bartók. As far as the other products of the anniversaries are concerned—the concerts and festivals—the memories left are not unambiguously favourable, even though it may be unjust to pass a summary judgment with the hindsight of so many years. My memories include some important and significant events as well. Of course, my generation has also retained the awkward feeling that in the 1960s and 1970s, when every concert season and festival seemed compelled to open with Bartók works, the performance of Bartók's music had become rather academic. A larger than life statue of Bartók was erected in public. The culminating point of all this was when Bartók's remains were brought home from the United States in 1986. It was closing time for a political era, and an ideology which had already failed in practice, tried for the last time to place a halo on itself, with a demonstration that it had understood Bartók.

The more Bartók became fashionable and taken over for political purposes, the less justice was done to the composer.

It seemed as if on the pretext of Bartók they exploited something that simply did not exist, or that Bartók had not intended that way. There is for instance "folklorism", which they so strongly emphasized, to prove that Bartók had been the composer of the people. I am more and more inclined to think (and can of course argue this at length from the composer's statements and the music itself) that Bartók did not at all like or support "folklorism," unless it was of high quality. In Bartók's values, this area included his own works, Kodály's compositions and the great scores of Stravinsky's Russian period that he believed to have been based on folk-music themes. Only works which show a touch of genius.

This can be seen in Bartók's own writings, for example in a 1931 study, "The Influence of Folk Music on Present-day Art Music". In Bartók's words: "... folk music is of an artistic significance only if it can penetrate into, and influence, higher art music in the hands of someone who has a great talent for shaping it."

Yes, quality was what counted. And going to the villages, collecting and thereby absorbing all that the home of folk music, the *genius loci*, offered. This is how Bartók created his own tradition, additional to the tradition of classical European music, a tradition which for Bartók was self-evident. In the light of this, I think that what was played out in post-war Hungary in Bartók's name was contrary to the composer's spirit. Had Bartók been alive, he would have rejected this kind of cult.

There was a less spectacular event which lent an impetus to Bartók research—the setting up of the Bartók Archives.

In fact the Bartók Archives was established for the banal reason that Béla Bartók jr., Bartók's older son, who had stayed in Hungary, simply could not store all the material in his apartment. The Bartók manuscripts remaining in Hungary were therefore packed up and taken to the Academy of Sciences, and Zoltán Kodály and Bence Szabolcsi, who were aware of the priceless treasure they represented, provided a roof for the collection. This "roof" was then given the name Bartók Archives, since 1969 attached to the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences as an independent research institute. They managed to acquire the assistance of Denijs Dille, the eminent Belgian Bartók scholar, as the first head of the Bartók Archives, and Szabolcsi also persuaded some of his one-time musicology students to join the small team of the Archives. This is how I came here, in 1963, two years after the foundation.

What part of Bartók's oeuvre is preserved in the United States?

When Bartók went to America, he took along, if not the greater, the more important part of his manuscripts—everything he needed to document copyright and to secure new copyright in the United States against Universal Edition, his publisher, which was in Nazi Vienna. This makes up the more important half of his oeuvre, particularly if the manuscripts are considered from the point of view of their source value and not their quantity, the actual number of sheets. The American collection now in the possession of Peter Bartók contains about three quarters of the important manuscripts! The situation is different for the folk-music material and other documents. Bartók only took with him what he intended to work on, as for instance his

still unpublished collection of Romanian folk music. Although it has been said many times before, there may be no harm in stressing once again that the cold war unfortunately also had its implications for the Bartók cause. Before the death of Ditta Pásztory, Bartók's widow, in 1982 (and for a few years after that, until legal problems were settled) there could be no question of exchanging photocopies between the New York and the Budapest Bartók Archives. Few scholars could visit both collections to examine manuscripts and it was impossible to unite the material divided both physically and politically, even for the sake of a critical edition.

And the situation today?

Around 1988–89, after the American heir, Bartók's younger son, Peter Bartók, took possession of his inheritance, it looked as if a complete edition could be launched immediately, under the guidance of the Budapest Bartók Archives, and naturally with an international team of scholars as editors. Peter Bartók readily sent us photocopies of the complete American material of the compositions, and in exchange he naturally received the Budapest material. In the winter of 1991–92, Bartók's two sons made a joint declaration concerning the necessity for the edition to the President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and it seemed that all that was needed for work to begin was to negotiate publication details. In the meantime, I organized workshop meetings with at least a dozen scholars who had already been working on draft volumes, in short, all the conditions for this great project were in place. But then something changed. Peter Bartók understood the importance of an improved and faultless edition for performers. Nowadays, whenever Universal Edition or Boosey & Hawkes reprint a Bartók score because the

previous edition is sold out, Peter Bartók, with his assistants, prepares lists of the errors in the previous edition and spares no time, money or energy in doing so. At the moment he gives priority to this and is of the opinion that a complete edition is untimely until all the scores on the market have been revised. I tried to convince him that the function of a complete edition is different from that of a revised edition: it is a context which for a given composition shows not merely a single version, the last one, which in musicology is called even in the English-speaking world a "Fassung letzter Hand". The chronological variants, the different versions, omitted movements, etc. should be made available, partly for the future performer, partly for those interested in Bartók's compositional process. Work on the complete edition should be started soon, otherwise we miss the historical momentum. Not only because experienced older and younger Bartók scholars are now fully familiar with the intricacies of the task, and because at this moment we have joined in league with outstanding musicians such as György Kurtág, György Ligeti, Zoltán Kocsis, Péter Eötvös and András Schiff, but above all because of the overall importance of a critical edition and its potential impact on Bartók interpretation.

Is the absence of a complete edition and the still far from easy investigation of sources also the reason why, after the Second World War, the interpretation of Bartók in general departed from Bartók's original intentions?

This is a fairly delicate question. There are musicians still alive who were Bartók's pupils, and who claim that they are the sole custodians of an authentic performance of Bartók. I could mention both good and bad examples for this. Of good examples, there is the violinist Zoltán

Székely, who has never said that he alone possesses this wisdom, but his recently published book (*Székely and Bartók: The Story of a Friendship*) outlines, with an enormously rich documentation, everything that a musician who was really close to Bartók knows of things which have since been forgotten and which could only have been learned from Bartók himself. But can we influence the younger generations of interpreters? Personally I am disappointed. I had thought that with the release in 1981 of an anthology of Bartók's own recorded performances by Hungaroton (edited by Zoltán Kocsis and myself)¹ something similar to the movement of the "historic performance" of Baroque and Classical works would occur. In Bartók's case, however, Bartók's own recordings did not penetrate the mainstream of teaching and interpretation. In the Juillard School of New York or the Tchaikovsky Conservatoire of Moscow, if Bartók is being taught at all, they take a look at the score and, with the help of the local traditional understanding of notation, they turn out a Bartók interpretation which "looks well", somewhere, say, between a Chopin piece and the *Appassionata*. On the other hand, one of the main problems for a breakthrough of exemplary Bartók performances is—if I may make a somewhat more removed, commercial comment here—that in recent years there has been a drastic fall in the number of record companies the world over. If two or three companies are merged, all that is needed is one single recording of Bartók's Violin Concerto or the *Concerto*, which is always recorded by the company's current star; the primary consideration is not whether the musician in question excels in the interpretation of Bartók. I think that fifteen years ago the Bartók discography was much richer than it is today.

The strange paradox is that, despite all this, Bartók is still fashionable. Anyone who considers himself up in the arts usually mentions Bartók as one of the century's great composers.

This is true, specifically for certain genres like the string quartets, concertos, works for chamber orchestra. But I wonder whether such impressions are fully pertinent. I attended some of the conferences inspired by the Bartók anniversary and in two places I had something of a shock. One was in Radford, Virginia, where a colleague was trying to find Bartók's place in the 20th century. According to his examinations, Bartók might be placed fourth or fifth among the leading 20th-century composers. He referred to statistics of the frequency of Bartók performances, the royalties the heirs got, etc. His argument seems to be a warning that the Bartók image has somewhat changed. The other occasion was at this year's Bartók Colloquium in Szombathely. Vera Lampert reviewed the Bartók recordings circulated in America. Her examination of the repertoire proved that although the *Concerto* is still one of the most often performed pieces, where the other 20th-century composers are concerned Bartók does not always achieve third place but may come farther back. So that while with some works, Bartók is really one of the classics of the 20th century, from another aspect he is not known well enough. One of his major works, the *Cantata Profana* has hardly any discography, and, for that matter, there is a really good Bartók score, *Five Hungarian Folk-songs for Voice and Orchestra*, from 1933, which has not been published to this day. There are many gaps in Bartók's international reception.

1 ■ See Stephen Walsh: "Bartók in the Studio" in *NHQ* 86.

Is there a parallel between the break in Bartók's interpretation, its departure from the authentic Bartók on the one hand, and the precision work which has become fashionable in analyses?

Here too, the difference in the way Bartók is being received in Hungary and abroad is really striking. Abroad, Bartók is just one of the potential subjects at the mercy of eager analysts; in Hungary he is by far the most important, someone on whom new methods can be tested. I have had the great fortune to have seen and lived through the flourishing of Bartók analysis virtually from my student days on. As a student at the Liszt Academy of Music, I was present at those famous debates where his opponents tried to bring Ernő Lendvai to bay, while the majority of the composer and musician confraternity naturally stood by him. In Lendvai's analysis the progressive musicians celebrated (I remember the words of Ligeti and others almost word for word) that Bartók also had a method and technique which can be incorporated into a system and which can be compared to those of Schoenberg or Webern. At the same time, these analyses, together with writings by Lajos Bárdos, the senior professor of music theory at the Liszt Academy of Music, the young Ligeti's analysis, for instance, of *Bear Dance*, the studies of Bence Szabolcsi and József Ujfalussy, and the outstanding work of János Kárpáti and György Kroó, all bear out the fact that Bartók analysis in Hungary never stopped at decoding the technical elements, but also dealt with the semantics, the meaning of the work. In connection with Lendvai, everybody now speaks of the golden section and the axis system, which indeed are significant parts of his theory, but what they usually leave out of consideration is that Lendvai was seeking answers to such conceptual problems as, for instance, why

Bartók used the acoustic scale when wishing to express blossoming and renaissance—in other words what the composer intended to express in the idiom of his music. In approaching Lendvai and other Hungarian scholars, analysts abroad fail to notice or to appreciate this complexity, that compositional technique and message are inseparable.

For various reasons the Bartók image in Hungarian musicology has not become really well known abroad, while foreign musicologists have gone their own particular way. From the outset they examined Bartók's music in a different manner. As a somewhat crude simplification, I'd go so far as to say that the major research projects of the nineteen fifties and sixties undertaken by German scholars, and later by Americans, took Bartók as their subject because his music was different from other materials they examined; so if someone did not feel at home, let's say in discussing dodecaphony, they turned to Bartók, and there they came upon scores which because of a structure what was strictly symmetrical, practically cried out for analysis. Examining the role of folk music also emerged as a theme for research, at least as far as it could be approached by a foreign scholar at all. This, of course, might appear to be a highly supercilious comment, and I am happy to qualify it by adding that, over the years, Bartók analysis, particularly in the United States, has become increasingly virtuoso and brilliant. If you listen today to a Bartók analysis at an American or British conference on music theory, you are taken aback by the virtuosity of the account rendered of every single note, done in the vocabulary of the three or four analytical schools. Nevertheless, these analyses still do not deal with the individuality of a work as a whole but rather with isolated elements of Bartók's grammar and vocabulary. For Bartók, I

think—almost as for a Romantic composer—the process of composition could not get moving until he happened upon an original idea as a result of inspiration and improvisation. What followed was simply its realization, which Bartók considered as an almost mechanical task. In point of fact, he even wrote about this.

What you have been saying here is amplified in your new book, of which it is said that it may well shape the future of Bartók studies.

For the last thirty years I have worked primarily on Bartók. After many difficult years, I may be the first to have seen practically all the existing manuscripts of Bartók's compositions. The aim of my book, which will appear in the USA in the winter of 1995–96², is a presentation of Bartók's compositional process witnessed in the sources from the moment of inspiration to the interpretation of the work. Besides I trust to show what I strongly believe that Bartók could and should be treated simply as an ordinary classical composer.

Scholars already traced the road from folk music to the genuine Bartók works, those which are not straightforward direct folk-song arrangements?

This is a most difficult question from the scholar's standpoint, and it can be approached from two directions, at least in theory. From one, you may follow in Bartók's track and try to become familiar with his sources and in the same order as he did. This, of course, is almost impossible. The articles and dissertations that set out on this track usually get lost in oceans of material. To reconstruct Bartók's interpretation of folk music

seems to be a kind of unachievable maximum goal. Another approach promises more realistic results. One can start out from Bartók's music and filter out everything which proves to be experience following from classical music. What remains is what is specifically folk-inspired. An excellent example of this approach can be found in several chapters of János Kárpáti's book, *Bartók's Chamber Music* (Pendragon Press, 1994). I myself have also been concerned quite often, for instance, with the appearance and structural implications of themes of strophic formation in Bartók's music. You can often catch Bartók in the act of turning—deliberately or unintentionally—to various folk-music practices. Of course, the amount of such details only makes the very essence more and more confusing; in other words, in Bartók's head and in his notion of what music is about, this most singular-familiarity with folk music, which is unique to him, always goes hand in hand with a tremendous and profound knowledge of classical music. In this respect the great importance of the more than 2,000 pages of "performing editions" of classical piano music Bartók published is perhaps not common knowledge. I think this crucially important, because it shows that he was acquainted with the classical repertoire as a whole more thoroughly than composers usually are. His piano playing alone, whether it was German music or his own, confirms the fact that a Vienna-Budapest centred Central European musicality was in Bartók's very blood. Omit Bartók's experience of classical music and analysis will again come to a dead end. ■

András Batta

2 ■ *Béla Bartók: Composition, Concepts and Autograph Sources*. Berkeley, University of California Press.

Bartók and Dukas

Béla Balázs, the librettist of *Bluebeard's Castle*, in a recollection¹, stressed the special Hungarian dramatic style of the mystery play² which he traced back to the folk ballad, and in a wider sense, to the folk song. "I was looking for a Hungarian dramatic style. I wanted to enlarge for the stage the dramatic vein of Székely folk ballads. I wanted to portray the modern soul using the spontaneous primeval colours of folk song. I wanted the same as Bartók. We wanted it together in a shared youth."

György Kroó

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We believed that what is completely new can only be planted out having been grown from seeds that are altogether old, and it is only pristine material that can stand up to our spiritualization, without evaporating under our fingers. Something can only be true if it is simple, and something can only be really new if it is simple. [...] My mystery was born of the common faith of a common youth."

All this is true both on the factual plane and in a deeper sense. In addition to a plan imbued with patriotism to create an elevated national art music, Bartók was also led to the folksong by the "art nouveau folkart fashion of the age",³ creating a mood that allowed him to exploit relevant chance episodes in his life.⁴ Balázs's *Napló* mentions joint field work in the Szeged area.⁵ Even apart from this fact, the very sense and spirit of their relationship—which in fact never developed into a close

1 ■ *Bécsi magyar újság*, May 21, 1922, p. 7.

2 ■ This was the term used to characterize this one-act play in the April 20, 1910 number of *Színjáték*, which included the prologue of the minstrel from the play. The journal, edited by Artur Bárdos, also published the whole play on June 13 (Vol. I, Nos. 16–17), with a dedication to Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály. It first appeared in book form in 1912, in *Misztériumok op. V* (Mysteries Op. V), containing three one-act plays: *Bluebeard's Castle*, *The Fairy* and *Blood of the Holy Virgin*.

3 ■ Tibor Tallián, in Brockhaus–Riemann: *Zenei Lexikon*, Vol. I, p. 130.

4 ■ In 1904 Bartók spent half a year at Gerlicpuszta in Gömör County, in 1905 he combined a summer holiday with ethnomusicological field work at Vésztő, and in March 1905 he met Zoltán Kodály. See Denijs Dille: *La rencontre de Bartók et de Kodály*, 1990.

5 ■ September 5, 1906: "Béla Bartók was here, for a week we collected folk songs together." Béla Balázs: *Napló* (Journals); Magvető, 1982. Vol. I, p. 339.

friendship—was determined by the force of the personality of Zoltán Kodály, who most clearly recognized and most consistently stood for a modern Hungarian art drawing on folklore. In those years Balázs was on friendly terms with Kodály, who was two years his senior. They shared a room at the Eötvös College; in 1904 they both took part in the foundation of Thalia, an independent dramatic society organized by György Lukács, and in 1906 Kodály accompanied Balázs on a scholarship to Berlin and Paris valid for two semesters. In 1906 Kodály wrote his doctoral dissertation, "The Stanzaic Structure of Hungarian Folk Song", and by December of the same year Rozsnyai, the publisher, brought out the pioneering volume of *Hungarian Folk Songs*, with twenty songs jointly edited, collected and prefaced by Kodály and Bartók. In the summer of 1907, in the course of field work in the Székely Country, Bartók came upon living memories of the ancient pentatonic melodic style which the Hungarians had brought to their new home from Asia; early in 1908 he was already reporting his discovery in a scholarly article on Székely Ballads⁶. This, together with another article on the ballads of Transdanubia⁷, reveals his lasting interest in the genre. Even if it cannot be presumed that Balázs was aware of this process or that there existed a direct inspiration for his choice of subject and the metric form he used for his one-act play, the ancient Hungarian octosyllabic, I feel persuaded that Balázs's recollections which I quoted at the outset reveal a correspondence to all this.

Apart from the Hungarian connotations, the playwright's intention of creating a new dramatic style and his choice of subject for this first Hungarian mystery play, there was a significant French inspiration, on which Balázs keeps silent. To my knowledge László Bóka was the first to call attention to the relationship between the French womanizer cum murderer (Barbebleu) and his Hungarian equivalent (Márton Ajgó)⁸ in the ballad of *Anna Molnár* in a postscript to the 1960 edition of Balázs's play. According to Bóka, the author himself had told him that he had learned of "the Bluebeard legend, tracing it back to the famous Perrault fairy tale"⁹ while at the Eötvös College. The credibility of the information is backed by the fact that the interpretation of Balázs's one-act play, as Bóka's study discusses, is fully in keeping with the August 4, 1908 entry in Balázs's *Napló*, which springs on today's readers the idea of associating Barbebleu with Don Juan. "Don Juan and Barbebleu will be a playlet. They are to meet in the inn. Barbebleu is speaking while he leads Don Juan to his place."¹⁰ According to Bóka's interpretation: "Prince Bluebeard is the symbol of avid youth, he reflects the desires of the adolescent turned loose on love, who longs for the love of every woman, but does not want to throw in his lot with any of them; along with the joy of kissing, he feels the desire to escape and for new, still sweeter kisses, as a gloomier, more tragic version of the Don Juan myth. What yesterday counted as conquest and a merciless male

6 ■ In: *Etnographia* XIX, 1, 2, 1908.

7 ■ In *Etnographia* XX, 5, 1909.

8 ■ Márton Ajgó features in a Hungarian folk ballad: he "lures Anna Molnár under the tree on which he hanged his old sweethearts": "She looked up above her head, / Among the branches of the willow, Behold, there are six fair girls / Hanged in succession: Woe! she thought to herself, / I shall be the seventh today, / Tears welled up from her eyes, onto the face of Márton Ajgó."

9 ■ In: *Histoires ou Contes du Temps passé, avec des Moralités*, 1697, Paris.

10 ■ *Napló*, Vol. 2, p. 477.

triumph, today turns into a grave, inexplicable memory. It is the male seeking a home and a partner who realizes that all deserted women live on in the secret chambers of his heart, and memory preserves its rigid victims like some dreadful wax-works." We do not know to what depth and in what detail the student Balázs became acquainted with the Barbeblue legend. He might have come upon the book by the Abbé Bossard¹¹ and in it read the Breton *complaint*, which presumably had survived on the lips of the people since the 15th century trial in Nantes and which, since Bishop Malestroit figures in it as a hero, has also been preserved in ecclesiastic records. This *complaint* might also have strengthened his inclination to re-plant "what is completely new... from what is completely old". The actualization of the legends of Bluebeard and Don Juan marks an important milestone in the renewal of European literature and the theatre, including the musical theatre. Balázs must have encountered the latest manifestation of this spirit of adaptation, shaping, creating versions and ringing the change in Paris, where the Opéra Comique in 1907 staged Paul Dukas's three-act opera, based on a work by Maurice Maeterlinck, a musical tale entitled *Ariane et Barbe-bleue*. He may have gone with Kodály to see the new opera, whose libretto Maeterlinck had expressly intended for a musical setting¹² ("une sorte d'opéra légendaire ou féerique destinée avant tous à la musique") and called a "simple libretto"¹³ ("Un canevas pour le musicien").

Kodály recognized the power of Maeterlinck's libretto, but he did not think highly of Dukas's music. "A most interesting text, and bad music," he wrote to Emma Sándor, who later became his wife.¹⁴ The orchestration is thick and over-stuffed—generally without any idea. A few fine sonorities are not enough to compensate." At the same time, the opera, in particular its first act and the symbolist aestheticism of Maeterlinck's text (and those of his works before *Ariane et Barbe-bleue* even more) had all the more influence on Béla Balázs. I will return to the nature of this influence in more detail.

The first works for the musical stage involving the Bluebeard legend date back to the French Revolution and were of a single type, what was called the rescue opera (*pièce de sauvetage*); they were the work of André Erneste Modeste Grétry (*Raoul, Barbe Bleue*) and Nicolas Dalayrac (*Raoul sire de Créqui*). These operas all end with the escape of innocent heroes who have been pursued, imprisoned and threatened with execution. In fact, they are latter-day variations on a historical subject: the taking and tearing down of the Bastille. A classical example of the type is Beethoven's *Fidelio*, which received its first performance in its final form on the eve of the conclusion of the Holy Alliance in Vienna. Equally well-known is Puccini's *Tosca* of 1900, based on Sardou's 1887 play, which turned the ideology of the rescue play inside out and exemplified its anachronism by the end of the century.

It is less well known, however, that still in 1899, even such an esoteric poet as Maurice Maeterlinck felt obliged to comply

11 ■ *Giles de Rais, Maréchal de France dit Barbebleue*, 1885, Paris.

12 ■ Both the Belgian and Hungarian writers' works were set to music without adaptation, placing them in the category of *Literaturoper*.

13 ■ Despite the public dedication to Bartók and Kodály, Balázs's mystery play was also staged without music in a *matinée* arranged by the journal *Nyugat* on April 23, 1913.

14 ■ June 23, 1907, Paris.

with the traditions of the genre. This he declared through the subtitle of his work. "Ariane et Barbe-bleue ou la Délivrance inutile", a subtitle which also indicates that the symbolist writer of the fairy opera (opéra légendaire ou féérique) takes an even more bitter view than the authors of *Tosca*: every kind of freedom that comes from the outside is a futile gift, Maeterlinck suggests. It is true, however, that he does so without a grain of pathos, projecting it on the plane of private life and love, replete with resignation.

On the level of the actual plot, this involves the incident when the peasants invade Bluebeard's palace, whom they believe has murdered his wives, to rescue Ariane; she, however, calms them down and saves her husband, from whom she does not want to be saved since she has come to redeem both him and the other women. On the other hand, when Ariane finds the five former wives of Bluebeard in the dungeon of the palace and opens the door to freedom for them, they do not know what to do with this freedom. Ariane departs from the palace alone, the other women close the door behind her to remain there forever, voluntary slaves to the love without mercy of a man. Who is this Ariane? Is she a romantic heroine, sent from the world of the fairies, who leaves the human world empty-handed, without having achieved her purpose? Is she the ideal Woman of *fin-de-siècle* feminism, who is not satisfied with the role of shadow but wants that form of happiness which cannot live in darkness; is she the reincarnation of the daughter of King Minos, who provides a helpful thread to those straying in the eternal labyrinth? We cannot say with absolute certainty that

Balázs, in giving the heroine of his mystery play the name Judit, cut this thread. According to a recent interpretation¹⁵, based on a study on Hebbel Balázs wrote, and on his interest in Hebbel's dramatic methods, it is the eponymous heroine of Hebbel's 1840 play *Judith* who lives on in Balázs's Judit: a woman who is unable to stop half-way (in other words unable to content herself with a conceivable compromise in the encounter between man and woman) and who—in the scenes before the sixth and the seventh doors—inevitably overturns the "natural" order of the world and has to suffer for this. So her rapid collapse, her unresisting acceptance of her fate after encountering the former wives is a Hebbelian touch. Indeed, the character of Judit also allows for another interpretation of Balázs's mystery—the one which Bartók actually accepted; in this interpretation, the mystery play, based on the 19th century Lohengrin–Elsa relationship, formulates the story of the two as the fate of the extraordinary man, one of the chosen and the woman not suited to commune with him and redeem him.

Despite this, the structure of the first act of Maeterlinck's play, arranged around the opening of the seven doors, what can be seen behind the doors, and the theatricality—if not the contents—of lightings and colours, as well as the fact that, unlike earlier versions of the legend, the women behind the last door are alive, had a definite influence on the structure of *Bluebeard's Castle*. Even more important is the influence Maeterlinck's other plays from before 1894, particularly his *Les aveugles* of 1890 and *Pelléas et Mélisande* of 1892, had on Balázs in creating a Hungarian type of symbolist play. We know from the author himself¹⁶ that the castle "is not a realistic

15 ■ See Carl Stuart Leafstedt's doctoral dissertation submitted to Harvard University, 1994.

16 ■ Béla Balázs: *Válogatott cikkek és tanulmányok* (Selected Articles and Studies), ed. Magda Nagy, 1968.

Ex. 1 a

[Très modéré]

Alt. *pp* très expressif

Vlc. *pp* très expressif

Ex. 1 b

Andante ♩ = 92
(Cord.)

pp sempre leg. misterioso

stone castle", but the soul of man, "solitary, dark and mysterious... Bluebeard admits the beloved one into his own soul. And the castle (the stage) shudders, weeps and bleeds. When the woman walks in it, she walks on a living being." The coloured shafts of light appearing on stage when the doors are opened refer not to the hidden objects behind them but to the psychological impressions the sight has on the new woman: the visual symbols of elements of emotion and state of mind. The two characters in the mystery play are not individualized, one is Man, the other is Woman.

The dialogue is not an exchange of thoughts or arguments, it is merely loaded words, with ambiguity and suggestive of hidden meanings. This fragmentary dialogue reflects their anguish. The play has no external motifs, no setting, no actors, nor any plot in the conventional sense. No more happens than Judit asking for the keys and opening the doors. She relates

what she sees, but what is important, what "takes place" between the two of them and changes their relationship, remains unsaid. A baleful presentiment is felt throughout. Even the lighting is symbolic (between the light of hope and the darkness of hopelessness): the castle on stage looms in the night, at the climax of the opera the stage is charged by a dazzling white radiance, at the end everything is wrapped in darkness. The atmosphere suggests the message in Maeterlinck's plays: man is powerless, unable either to confront or to change the mystical force of his fate.

It is generally accepted that Bartók's music was considerably influenced by Debussy and the atmosphere of his opera. Stylistically this can hardly be denied. The independent seventh, the chords of ninths, the harmonic links, pentatony, here and there the whole tone scale, and the recitative character of the vocal parts—as Bartók himself mentioned more

than three decades Ex. 3

later in one of his Harvard lectures—primarily point to the influence of *Pelléas*. This influence became lasting and extraordinary for Bartók; he could recognize in certain elements of Debussy's style, particularly in the use of pentatony and *parlando*, the natural musical ambience of the folk *mélodie*, which from 1906 on determined the path taken by new Hungarian music. The pentatony and melodic contours of the Celtic twilight sound

which opens *Pelléas* (Ex. 1 a) and the opening melody of *Bluebeard's Castle* (Ex. 1 b), reminiscent of a ballad, point the two works to the same past musically as well.

A similarly concrete musical link exists between the music of Dukas's opera and that of Bartók. Their common folk-song character creates a similarity between Bartók's above quoted four-line pentatonic melody and the *complaint* of the earlier women in the Dukas's opera. Dukas's melody is also strophic, with two different lines being repeated to make up a verse, and the verse with the keynote of D sharp being repeated in full, starting from F sharp. Its archaism springs from its modal colour. Originally, in the 1911 first version of *Bluebeard's Castle* and even in the 1912 second version, Bartók

La porte s'ouvre lentement.
Modéré

Même jeu, mais, cette fois,
l'irradiation est intolérable.

repeated his folk-song imitation, though not transposed, simply with a different orchestration and harmonization (Ex. 2).

In fact the tonality of Dukas's and Bartók's operas is also the same. *Ariane et Barbe-bleue* opens and closes in F sharp minor as does *Bluebeard's Castle*. If in Dukas one separates the first act from the body of the opera and compares the episode of the opening of the seven doors with Bartók's one-act opera, one finds another, highly important analogy on the plane of the musical and dramatic relationship between tonality and lighting. On opening the sixth door, Dukas's music is filled with the radiance of the diamonds behind it. The story, started in F sharp minor, here switches to F sharp major: "L'irradiation est intolérable (Ex. 3)."

Ex. 2

LE CHANT SOUTERRAIN

Les cinq fil - les d'Or-la - mon - de (la fée noire est

pp 24 24

mor - - te) Les cinq fil - les d'Or-la - mon - de

Ont cher-ché les por - - tes

LA NOURRICE

Ce sont les autres fem - mes?

poco cresc.

(plus sonore)

En animant insensiblement *mf* (#)

ARIANE

Oui

En animant insensiblement *p*

lam - - pes, Ont ou - vert les

tours, Ont tra - ver - sé trois cents

LA NOURRICE 6

Refermez cette porte, Le chant remplit la

cresc.

sal - - - les sans trou - ver le

salle, il se répand partout!

Un peu moins lent
que précédemment
(plus puissant)

jour. Ont ou - vert un

ARIANE
(essayant de refermer la porte)

Je ne peux pas.

Un peu moins lent
que précédemment

cresc. - - - sempre mf

puits so - - - no - - - ré

3 3

Des - cen - - dent a -

LA NOURRICE

Il remon - te, il redou - - - ble!...

3 3

lors, Et sur u - - ne
(Elles essaient de refermer
la porte qui cachait
les diamants).

Poussons la première por-te. Aidez moi... —

cresc.

por - te clo - - se Trouvent une clef
(Affolée, la Nourrice entre
à son tour sous la voûte)

El-le ré-siste aus-si!

cresc. - sempre

d'or...

Taisez-vous! Taisez-vous! Elles vont nous perdre aussi!

(de plus en plus puissant)

ff
Voient l'O - cé - an par les fen - - - tes,
(Etendant son manteau)
E - touffons cette voix! Mon manteau — couvrira l'ouver-

Ont peur de mou -rir
ARIANE
tu - - - re... Je vois des marches sous le

Et frapp(ent) à la por - te clo - - - se
seuil. Je vais des-cendre où l'on m'ap-
cresc. *cresc.* - - - *sempre*

au Mouv^t
Sur les dernières paroles

Un peu élargi

Sans o - ser l'ou - vrir...

pel - - - le...

Un peu élargi

au Mouv^t

ff

dim.

8^{va} bassa

du chant, Barbe-Bleue entre dans la salle. Il s'arrête un instant et regarde.

In the case of *Bluebeard's Castle*, as I already mentioned, the stage lights up gradually, and from the complete nocturnal darkness of the beginning, on the opening of the fifth door we arrive at the noon radiance of white light. The musical gesture which comes directly before the opening of the door is—despite the difference in tempi (“Modéré” “Un peu retenu” in Dukas and “Vivacissimo...

allegro molto” in Bartók)—identical in both operas in rhythm, the direction of the melodic line and in the sense of its non traditional harmonic organization. Concerning tonality, it is also the same, but logically, in the sense of its non-traditional harmonic organization. Dukas’s minor–major relation corresponds in Bartók’s harmonic system to the relation of opposite poles, a polymodal tension on

Ex. 4

Larghissimo ♩ = 66

fff (Tutti ed Organo pieno)

Meno largo ♩ = 88

poco allarg. **Blaubart** *ff* quasi parlando, ma sempre grave
Kékszakállú

Die - ses ist mein Machtgehege, mei - ner Fe - ste
Lásd ez az én bi-ro-dal-mam, Mesz-sze né-ző

mf

poco - - allarg. -

ferner Ausblick. Nichtwahr, herr-lich wei - te Lan-de?
szép könyöklőm. Ugy-e hogy szép nagy, nagy or-szág?

molto cresc. - - - - - ffff

The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system is for the piano, marked 'Larghissimo' with a tempo of 66 beats per minute. It features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand, both marked with a forte (f) dynamic. The second system is for the vocal part, marked 'Meno largo' with a tempo of 88 beats per minute. It begins with a 'poco allarg.' marking and a forte (ff) dynamic. The vocal line is in German and Hungarian, with lyrics: 'Die - ses ist mein Machtgehege, mei - ner Fe - ste' and 'Lásd ez az én bi-ro-dal-mam, Mesz-sze né-ző'. The piano accompaniment in the second system is marked with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The third system continues the vocal part, marked 'poco - - allarg. -'. It includes the lyrics: 'ferner Ausblick. Nichtwahr, herr-lich wei - te Lan-de?' and 'szép könyöklőm. Ugy-e hogy szép nagy, nagy or-szág?'. The piano accompaniment in the third system is marked with a 'molto cresc.' (much crescendo) and ends with a fortissimo (ffff) dynamic.

the tonic axis. In this sense, the response to F sharp minor is C major, instead of Dukas's F sharp major. (Ex. 4.)

Quantitatively, these few similarities might seem to be of no consequence. Their significance, however, is indisputable. They constitute an impulse that

determines the fundamental key, the ballad tone and ballad frames as well as the musical and dramatic climax of *Bluebeard's Castle*. On the anniversary of Bartók's death, we ought to place a flower on Dukas's grave as well. 🌸

Tibor Tallián

Let this cup pass from me...

The *Cantata Profana* and the Gospel According to Saint Matthew

After the first performance of the *Cantata Profana* in Budapest in 1936 the writer and music critic Imre Keszi noticed that lonely "*retour à Bach*" in the treatment of the introduction. It unmistakably quotes, or rather remodels, the contrapuntal introductory music of the opening chorus of the *Saint Matthew Passion*.

What I propose to examine is a hypothesis that suggests itself: whether the *Cantata Profana* does not perhaps, via Bach's *Passion*, refer to an earlier, even more distant precedent, one which Bartók never made the subject of his public interest, namely the Bible, more particularly the Gospels.

A hypothesis demands confirmation. What, however, can be deduced without further ado from the reference to Bach is that the *Cantata Profana* is a work that looks backwards. This very first allusion points back to the age of the Baroque. It

goes without saying that, by choosing a text of a mythic character, Bartók looks into the deep well of a still more remote past, too, just as Thomas Mann does at the beginning of *Joseph and his Brethren*.

Has he thrown a third glance backwards into his own past? Students of Bartók have already touched on the subject that the *Cantata*, as a quasi-stage work, as a mystery play, recalls Bartók's main venture in the nineteen tens, his stage trilogy. Of those three works, it shows similarity primarily to the forest piece, the ballet *The Wooden Prince*, both in subject and in the symbolical means employed. It may not be totally irrelevant that Bartók turns to the same years in which he composed his ballet to draw the text for the *Cantata*. It is a fact that he was busy systemizing his collection of the Romanian colindas in the nineteen twenties, and it was surely while doing this that he found the Stag *colindă*, and decided to set it to music. But this was not his first encounter with the text. The cooling spring of Romanian folklore had offered it to him in the previous decade: he collected its two versions in 1914, shortly before the outbreak of the Great War.

The question to be addressed is whether there was a similarity in Bartók's mood and attitude in the period when the *Cantata* was composed, and some twenty

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years earlier, a similarity that caused him to return into his own past for a text to be composed. A further question is whether the *colindă* text, which he had stored on recording cylinders and on paper, in what could be called his objectified subconscious had surfaced from the depths of his memory, bringing with it simultaneous and consonant memories? Something that, for him, threw light on the Romanian folklore text and influenced the core subject and outward character of the new work, its form and content, to use a hackneyed phrase.

As to Bartók's state of mind in the decade of the Great War, it was, to put it briefly, miserable. This was true even of the two years that preceded the war; as soon as war broke out, symptoms of clinical depression appeared, including an odd sort of claustrophobia, a not quite literal cage syndrome. The lachrymose letter of complaint he wrote to his wife early in 1915 (the date cannot be precisely established) proves it. His position and state of mind somewhat improved in the summer of 1915. Ethnomusicological field-work once again promised an escape eastwards out of the cage that Budapest had become for him. However, the recovery was only partial. That road to Europe which he had so feverishly sought in the years before the war, as a balm for offences true or imagined he had suffered as a composer or man, remained barred.

Fortunately, Bartók had been long familiar with another, more spiritual, mode of travel, one which not even the war could deprive him of. His characteristic instrument for coping with the longing for remote parts of the world, for Europe, was to engage passionately in the learning of languages of the West. He did not make use of primers or grammars. Bartók's idiosyncratic method was to choose a literary masterpiece, and then he tried to read it,

decypher it, spell it out with the aid of a dictionary.

This longing for the World, redirected to languages, can be documented. In the war years he mentioned it repeatedly in letters to his wife, who was his partner in language learning. Two exclamation marks are added to "Italian!!" in a letter to his wife Márta written from Fülek in April 1915. "I sometimes long for a French book," he wrote to her in December 1916, from Tökésújfalú. A February 1917 letter mentions the learning of another language, or rather its interruption, due to urgent work, the need to orchestrate the ballet. "My learning Spanish, started with such splendid impetus, suffered an early and mournful end (but I will continue with it all the same). I have already read chapter 1.2 of *Don Quijote*. A good read. I am also thinking of teaching you Spanish in the summer. I mean it. We will continue with Italian at the same time—it will be precisely that which will be interesting: matching and separating two such closely related languages."

We do not know whether Bartók kept his promise to continue learning Romance languages with Márta in the summer of 1917. We know, however, that perhaps that summer, or even earlier, perhaps at the same time as reading *Don Quijote*, he tackled another book in Spanish. That was *El Nuevo Testamento*, published in Madrid in 1901. Bartók possibly acquired it at the time of his 1906 Iberian journey, adding it to a collection of Bibles that was to include editions in English, French, Italian, Romanian, and Slovak.

Let there be no misunderstanding: Bartók was no Bible-thumper. He was a born collector and comparer, and he collected the Bible primarily for its prose, because so many translations exist and they can be compared. It is worth noting too that although he owned the Bible in six

languages, there was no Bible in Hungarian or German, his two "native languages", in his original collection amongst copies that had clearly been acquired early this century. (A bibliophile edition of a Roman Catholic Hungarian Bible was presented to him by the organizers on the occasion of the 1937 *Éneklő ifjúság* [Singing Youth] Bartók evening.) One may perhaps conclude that, albeit the six copies suggest that the text of the Bible was important to Bartók, it was nevertheless a text that was so to speak remote to him as were—from a Central European point of view—some of the languages in which he owned them.

An examination of Bartók's Bibles shows that there are no underlinings or glosses in the Romanian or French Bibles. These, by the look of things, were not subjected to a comparative examination. The Italian and Slovak Bibles, on the other hand, were closely compared by him. In the Slovak Bible, many passages from the beginning right up to Genesis 16 are circled in red, with the note added, "different in Italian." It would appear that he left off his reading of the Slovak text at this point. In the Italian Bible there are, however, marginalia right up to Judges 1. Similar underlinings can be found in his English Bible (This was the edition published in London by Collins, 1904) for the first three Gospels. A number of English equivalents noted in his Spanish New Testament show that Bartók used the Scriptures in English as an aid to translation, a dictionary as it were, when reading Spanish. But he read the story of Jesus in Spanish, he approached the Gospels in the language of *The Inner Castle*.

To what degree did the approach imply penetration? He underlined right up to Luke 2, but longer passages in either Mark or Luke that he underlined or noted in the margin are few. Evidence for frequent word listing, or close attention to ques-

tions of meaning exists only for the first Gospel, Matthew, which, one might say, is of some relevance looked at from the aspect of the *Cantata Profana*.

It is, of course, impossible to establish of what use the Gospels were to Bartók beyond being an aid in the study and the comparison of languages, in other words how much of what he read he stored away spiritually and emotionally, and at what depth. One reason why this cannot be done is because it is not known how familiar Bartók had been with the Gospels earlier. We know that he had presented himself to Stefi Geyer in 1907 as someone who had been a confirmed atheist since adolescence. One can just about take it for granted, therefore, that he paid no attention to the New Testament between his childhood and the period he turned to it for help in language learning. It is highly doubtful that he had studied the text itself earlier. Roman Catholic religious instruction, of whose morally alienating effect he had spoken to Geyer, in no way stressed the biblical text.

Some of the markings in the Spanish New Testament suggest that it was there and then that Bartók discovered the Gospels, or rather, the continuing presence of Christ's words as saws and sayings in our language, particularly when we strike a more elevated tone. What appears to be typical of such a recognition is that Bartók not only underlined such a saying in the Spanish text but that he wrote it out in Hungarian on the back fly-leaf, quoting chapter and verse: Matt. 6:24, *No man can serve two masters*. For a similar reason he underlined Matt. 7:3, *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?* or Matt. 8:12, *But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*. As every man wounded

in the spirit he identified himself, and not without reason, one might say, with the subject of the Spanish heading for Chapter 13: *El profeta sin honor en su patria*. He reacts to the idea of selection in Matt. 20:16, *for many be called, but few chosen*. The underlining of Matt. 19:24 speaks for itself: *And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God*.

There is an emphatically underlined passage in Luke. The motive for the underlining is undoubtedly psychological, the question is whether the underlining of Luke 10:38–42 refers to Bartók's psyche, or that of his wife, who had every reason to take the passage as referring to herself, and not only because her name was Márta. *Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*

This episode elevates us from the proverbial wisdom level of the Gospels to a second and higher level, more significant from our point of view, on which Bartók confronted the words of Scripture. That is the level on which, with telling examples, Jesus tries to make clear to his disciples that the rules of social behaviour are as nothing, that they are not valid, that social and human relations, emotions and values, are mere appearances. In the "good part" passage the intention appears in a

relatively mild form, a slightly jocular form, perhaps. In Mark 3:33, a passage underlined by Bartók, Jesus' indifference to human values is openly manifest in relation to his mother and brothers. If I understand it right, Jesus breaks with a single devastating question those bonds of blood which are the most ancient organizing principle of the human race. *Who is my mother, or my brethren...* What here appears passively, manifests itself clearly and actively, although metaphorically, in numerous passages in the Gospels. Judging from his underlinings, Bartók reacted to these in a particularly sensitive manner. Matt. 10:12, *And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death*. Matt. 10:34–35, *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law*.

"No man can serve two masters", mentioned above, is another way of defying society. Seen in its context, this denies that basic factor of human cooperation which, according to Marx, made man what he is, and that is labour, the work for the maintenance of oneself and of society. The rejection of toil for food, drink and clothing, for a material future here and in the metaphor of the birds in the sky—is that not an order demanding metamorphosis or transfiguration?

Matt. 19:12 is an extreme and hyperbolic instance of the command to undergo metamorphosis. *For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of*

heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it. Before speaking, and afterwards too, Jesus warns that not everyone understands the word, only those who are able to receive it. I certainly do not claim to be one of those who are able to. Did the anti-clerical and atheist Bartók receive Jesus' message? The Spanish New Testament provides no answer, but there is no doubt of the effect the passage had on him. In addition to marking and underlining, in three places Bartók also commented briefly. One of the comments is in the margin of this passage: "oho!", he wrote with an exclamation mark, perhaps as a sign of indignation. Ten or so years later, at the time he worked on the *Cantata*, he appears to have absorbed Jesus' message. There are two high Cs in the tenor solo of the *Cantata* which, as we know, Bartók thought very important. Perhaps their message is that the eldest son, by turning into a stag, has entered the ranks of those who *seipsos castraverunt propter regnum caelorum*.

Bartók adds another sceptic comment to Matt. 19:28, *Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*. Bartók added in the margin, with a question mark: "Including Judas?" Perhaps that is one of those passages which can be comprehended by those who are able to receive it. The situation differs in the case of the third, and longest—two-sentence—marginal note to Matt. 6:1–6, *Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven... But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. That thy alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly... But thou when thou prayest,*

enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. Bartók comments in the margin: "So it is after all for the sake of a reward that we shall do good?! That is not perfection [.]"

It could well be that, theologically, this is Bartók's greatest misunderstanding but I am not brazen enough to attempt to dispel it. I shall not argue that Jesus's Father, who sees in secret, is himself the perfection Bartók demands. All I want to establish is what he himself means by perfection. It would appear that Bartók, who always enthuses when Jesus drastically cuts loose, when he splits and truncates, as it were, excising man out of the world, does not want to subject himself to that binding with which Jesus wishes to bind man, loosened from the world, to the kingdom of the Father. He does not wish man to be rewarded at the price of being seen in secret. He wants absolute emancipation, absolute non-observance—perfect solitude.

There is no doubt that the text of the *colindă* spoke to him about this complete and absolute emancipation. I take it as certain that he deliberately confronted the rebellion of the young stags in the *colindă* against their father with the evangelical humility and subjection which the Son of Man displays towards the ever present, secretly seeing, Father. Describing the *Cantata* based on the *colindă* as "profana" was an allusion to the Gospel, an expression of opposition to the Gospel. One may wonder what it was that triggered off the process of association, what allowed Bartók to recognize the true or imagined opposed parallels with the biblical texts acquired and read at the time of his claustrophobia. It could well have been that he was reminded of Bach's *Saint Matthew*.

Passion by the 200th anniversary of the first performance and the centenary of the revival of the work by Mendelssohn, both commemorated in 1929. László Vikárius's study on the sources of the *Cantata* has drawn attention to this fact, and much else too. But what made him recognize the connection and contrast between the Gospel text and the *colindă* chosen for composition by him? I think it is possible (so much so that I have hinted at it in the heading of my paper) that it was the motif shared by both myths, the scene of the temptation, and the cup as its metaphoric instrument, that acted as the trigger.

The temptation of Jesus occurs in the garden of Gethsemane. He is here tempted by the elementary human life-instinct which knows of no ethics. He implores three times: "let this cup pass from me", but then three times He overcomes His fear, subjecting Himself to the will of the Father as Socrates did to that of the Athenian judges: He was ready to drink the hemlock. (Matt. 26:39-42, *And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt... O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.*

One of the most accentuated motifs of the temptation scene in the *colindă* is the cup filled with wine on the enchanted table which appears in the lure of the father. The way Bartók deliberately interprets this is that the cup the hand of the father offers to the sons is the cup of dependence. In the *Cantata*, the sons refuse the cup, with the only possible answer as heard in the famous closing sentence of the largest stag: "Our mouths no longer drink from cups..."

But is this confrontation and denial really the only link between the metaphor of

drinking in the *Cantata* and that of the *Passion*? An unambiguous answer cannot be given, one may, however, be reminded of something one does not normally think of—does not dare to think of—when searching for identical motifs in the *Saint Matthew Passion* and the *Cantata Profana*. The motif of the cup and drinking does not first occur in the *Passion* in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus fell. There is an immeasurably important precedent—the cup on the table of the Last Supper. Holding it, speaking to his disciples, then too Jesus uses the images of drinking and not drinking, acceptance and rejection. The meaning of His words there is the same as of those He had said in the Garden. The wording, however, is different. At the Last Supper, He does not humbly submit himself to the new divine law, but he affirms it triumphantly as His own. It is unimaginable, that when in Bartók's inner ear the music for the final section of the *Cantata* at last resounded—we now know, it proved very difficult to find—that he should not also have heard the resonance of those other words of rejection and acceptance from the Gospel, to which, in places, the text of the *colindă* offered a perfect parallel. He may not have heard it resound consciously, or in his subconscious, but perhaps in those hidden layers of the personality which, in all of us, are ready to receive the promise of the transcendental. "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matt. 26:27-19). ☛

Bartók and the Words of the *Cantata*

Bartók cherished the words to his “profane” *Cantata* to the end of his life. This is quite unexpectedly documented in the composer’s late “poetic” English translation of the text (see Facsimile 1), a translation that does not appear to have ever been intended for direct use in the composition, but to have been conceived as a poetic rendering of what had crystallized in Bartók’s ears from the sound and rhythm of the Romanian original. He was attached to these words—this textual discovery of his—however less than friendly his relation to words generally was.¹

But how did composer and poem actually meet? How did this exceptionally close relationship start? Although it seems we are in possession of all the necessary documents to reconstruct what happened, we still have very little evidence that would allow some deeper insight into the develop-

ment of the intimacy between text and composer. Thus, there is no trace of any particular treatment whatsoever of the folk-song sources of his eventual libretto in Bartók’s different copies of the two *colinde*—texts 4a (“Cel unt’eș bătrână”) and 4b (“D-oi uncheș bătrân!”) according to his later classification—relating similar stories, if not directly one and the same, of the nine, or two, sons of an old man who hunted in the woods till they changed themselves into stags never to return home. The two *colinde* were first written down in one of the copy-books Bartók the ethnomusicologist used to keep a separate record of the words of folk songs (the melodies were noted into pocket-sized music note-books). There is no trace of Bartók’s attaching importance to the similarity between these two texts, separated from one another by some fifty pages in the copy-book, which, after all, was far from rare in his collection. As he was more preoccupied with musical questions, what he did register was that the first of the two ballads was sung to the same melody as yet another *colindă* (text 113a, “Că voi bine știți”) previously noted down as well as recorded.

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¹ ■ This is an allusion to the opening statement in Tibor Tallián’s sensitive analysis in his article, “Bartók and Words”, *Arion* 13. *Almanach International de poésie*, ed. György Somlyó, Budapest, 1982, pp. 78–83.

Later on, as he became more and more absorbed in the classification of his collection of "Romanian Christmas songs"—as he tried to term the genre—according to musical criteria, Bartók paired these latter songs as musical variants. Thus text 4b was classified as belonging to melody 12i while 4a had its own melody, 12bb. Since, however, a textual classification had also been decided on, Bartók marked the individual pieces according to textual type. It must have been then that the shorter and more fragmentary of the two versions was tagged as "szarvas", i.e. "stag" in Hungarian, while the longer, more completely preserved text was labelled as "*cerbu*", the Romanian word for "stag". The common number 4 was then assigned to them.

Bartók finished the manuscript of the first version of his *Colindă* book by May 1926, when he dispatched one copy to Bucharest and one to London in the hope of imminent publication. Instead, he suffered continuous frustration for years until, almost a decade later, he eventually brought out a book confined to the musical part only and thus excluding the second and longer part, the classification of all *colindă* texts.² Although he was again actively involved in publishing matters from early 1931, Bartók is not likely to have been engaged in the study of the collection in its entirety earlier than 1933–34. It was at that time that he worked on a revision of the whole material, checking all the recordings, neatly re-writing each melody for their inclusion in facsimile in the publication and, still thinking of the book as a whole, revising the transcription of the texts.

Sometime between 1926 and 1930 he is supposed to have selected the two related

colinde and to have prepared a particular compilation of them as a reconstruction (or re-creation) of an ideal complete version of the ballad preserved in them. The earliest phase of "editing" this compilation is witnessed by a manuscript page among the composer's American papers now in Peter Bartók's private collection (see Facsimile 2). Here divergencies between the two texts disappear. They are combined to form a poetic entity coherently expounding its subject matter. There is no doubt that this decisive first step can be considered as an irrevocable withdrawal from the original fragmentary folk texts into a stylized poetical world. The move from the occasional towards the fixed and well-defined is exactly what Bartók had done so often with his raw folk music material, in mixing elements taken from different variants of the same or related melodies, even though what he actually fixed was often less typical than specific.

Suffice it to compare the very first line in the compilation with those in the different copies of the two *colinde* to get an impression of Bartók's handling the problem of blending the rival texts.

Text 4b, folk-song	
collecting copy-book:	Doi unc[h]eș bătrân
Text 4a, folk-song	
collecting copy-book:	Șel unt'eș bătrân
Text 4b, formula copy:	Doi uncheș bătrân
Text 4a, formula copy:	Cel uncheș bătrân
"Urllibretto", crossed-out first line:	Doi uncheș bătrâni
"Urllibretto", corrected first line:	Cel uncheș bătrân

It is not crucial for our purposes here to fully understand why Bartók chose this and not that word or form of a word. What is important is that he already here mixes

2 ■ The most detailed discussion of this story is in Malcolm Gilles & Adrienne Gombocz: "The 'Colinda' Fiasco: Bartók and Oxford University Press", *Music & Letters*, 69/4 (October 1988), pp. 482–494.

Once upon a time there
Was an aged man. He
Had nine handsome boys, they
Came to life through him. He
Has not taught them any
Trade nor handicraft:
Neither ploughing lands, nor
Herding cows and hogs, nor
Rearing horses, oxen.
Yet he has them taught to
Hunt in forests dark.

Off they went to hunt in
Forests dark and wild.
There they hunted till they
Found a brook, a bridge, and
Trace of wondrous deer.
Those they traced, hunted
So they ~~all~~ got ~~lost~~ and
Changed into stags.

Yet their father could not
Bear to stay at home: he
Took his bow and went to
Forests dark and wild.
There he found the brook and
Trace of wondrous deer.
After them he went and
To a spring he came:
There he saw nine stags.
Down he knelt at once to
them at one of them.
Lo! the tallest stag, he
Spoke to him these words:
"Dearest father mine! oh
Do not shoot at us!
Else we will thee seize by
Antlers tall and strong.
And we will thee throw from

Mountain slope to slope, from
Mountain woods to woods, from
Rocks to rocks so fast:
Nise! thou wilt, dear father,
On the ragged boulders
Break to smithereens."

Yet their father unto
Them he spake these words:
"Oh, my dearest boys, my
Children most beloved!
Come, oh come with me to
Your beloved mother!
Yearning is your mother
Woful, sad, for you:
Lighted are the torches,
Laid the tables are, and
Full of wine the cups.
Cups are on the table,
Crying stands she there;
Cups replete with wine, yet
Sobbing sits she there."

But the tallest stag, he
Spoke to him these words and
Gave him answer thus:

"Father, dearest father,
Go thou home, go home to
Our beloved mother!
Yet we shall not go.

We'll not go with you. - For
Never shall our antlers
Enter gates and doors, but
Only woods and shrubs;
Never shall our bodies
Wear a shirt and coat, but
Only foliage;
Nevermore our feet shall
Walk on houses' floors but
Only on the sward;

Nevermore our mouth shall
Drink from cups and jugs, but
From the purest springs.

(recapitulation)

Once upon a time there
Was an aged man, he
Had nine handsome boys.
Never has he taught them
Any handicraft, he
Taught them only how to
Hunt in forests dark.
There they roamed, hunted
Till the year around, and
Changed into stags in
Forests dark and wild.
Never will their antlers
Enter gates and doors, but
Only woods and shrubs;
Never will their bodies
Wear a shirt and coat, but
Only foliage;
Nevermore their feet will
Walk on houses' floors, but
Only on the sward;
Nevermore their mouth will
~~drink~~ Drink from cups and jugs, but
From the purest springs.

Facsimile 1. The second known copy of Bartók's English translation of the libretto of his
Cantata profana (1930), photocopy in the Budapest Bartók Archives.
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the two text variants. "Cel" (That) is the corrected form of the first word in text 4a; "unches" (old man), however, comes from 4b; while "bătrân" (old or aged) is common.

On the other hand, it is not only the mixing of the two texts that makes the reading of this very first known copy of the libretto so exciting. Although at first he did not do more than put down a composite version of the two texts, at the next stage Bartók obviously began to consider the possibility of extending it. Thus the page also witnesses his first tentative insertions. In the first column he managed to delay the narration of the father's search for his sons through an inserted question plus one more line. In the father's enticing call to his sons, after referring to their mother, mention of her is repeated, thereby making up for the missing subject of the following line; at the same time, the reference to her becomes decidedly more emphasized by the inserted verse.

Haidați voi acasă
La maicuța voastră.
Dragă maica voastră
Cu dor vă așteaptă [...]

(Come ye home
To your little mother.
Your dear mother
Is waiting for ye longing...)

While the introduction to this speech is taken over from text 4a, the variant of this couplet extended to four lines beside the second column appears to be Bartók's own. In the first pair of lines in the father's speech itself, the duplication of the address, "Dragii taiculiței,/ Dragi fiuții miei"

(Your father's dear ones,/ My dear sons) originates in the fact that the relevant addressing lines from both *colinde* have been simply repeated. In the introduction to the final response of the largest stag, Bartók again provides a two-line extension to the original couplets, this time in two slightly different variants.

Some of the inserted additional notes to the text concern vocabulary items.³ This seems to have been prompted by the poet József Erdélyi's translation, prepared upon the composer's special request and published in the first 1930 issue of the literary periodical *Nyugat*. In his copy of the *Nyugat* issue Bartók inserted several corrections, most of them to the dearest son's warning reply to their father, one of those boastful statements that can be encountered in several *colinde* relating rather different stories about the victorious hunting of the great stag. At any rate, the passage had been corrupted in Erdélyi's rendering and Bartók tried to replace these mistranslated lines with new translations. He might have collated Erdélyi's poem with the particular copy of the libretto and so he might have checked some of the difficult words in this passage during this act of comparison.⁴

Apart from the extensions, there is a much more significant editorial inference with the original text in the basic layer of the libretto. This is no less than Bartók's stress upon and careful arrangement of the closing series of triplets. He not only highlighted their structural rhythm visually, using braces that separate them from one another, but also made the syntactic structure identical in all four. Only the last line of the final triplet starts differently,

3 ■ In this article the musical notation—most probably a so-called side sketch written during the composition when the "Urllibretto" was still being used—must be left out of particular consideration. For information on it, see my study, "Béla Bartók's *Cantata Profana* (1930): A Reading of the Sources", *Studia Musicologica*, 35/1–3 (1993–94), pp. 249–301.

4 ■ The dictionaries he consulted and referred to as "Burcianu" and "Langenscheidt", respectively, can be identified with the two Romanian-German dictionaries that once belonged to Bartók and are now kept in the BBA.

undoubtedly an emphasis on the central "poetic" statement. In fact, neither *colindă* includes each of the four statements.⁵

4a:

Că coarnile noaște
Nu întră pe ușă
Fără numai prin munte.
Picioarile noaște
Nu calcă 'n cenușă
Căci calca prin frunză
Buzuțile noaște
Nu-și beau din păhare
Căci beau din izvoare.

4b:

Că buzele noaște
Nu beau din păhar
Fără din izvoare
Trupurile noaște
Nu umblă 'n cămeșă
Fără numai prin frunză

"Urllibretto":

Că coarnile noaște
Nu întră pe ușă
Fără numai prin munte,
Trupurile noaște
Nu umblă 'n cămeșă
Fără numai prin frunza
Picioarile noaște
Nu calcă 'n cenușă
Fără numai prin frunză
Buzuțile noaște
Nu-și beau din păhare
Căci beau din izvoare.

Bartók, here again, obviously makes use of as much material in the two texts as possible. In doing so he actually deviates from his sources remarkably little. Nevertheless, he painstakingly works to achieve a uniformity in the first three triplets. The lines within the individual triplets as transformed for his version now readily compare. As far as the folk ballads are concerned, this is only true

for the first lines of the triplets in text 4a. The parallelity is now incomparably increased by turning to text 4b. "...[C]oarnile noaște" (Our antlers), "Trupurile noaște" (Our bodies), "Picioarile noaște" (Our feet) and "Buzuțile noaște" (Our lips). The first three of the second lines are also constructed very similarly to one another. "Nu întră..." (Do not enter), "Nu umbă..." (Do not walk) and "Nu calcă..." (Do not step). Moreover, each of the three last lines begins with "Fără numai..." (Only).

It could be very instructive to consult at this point the composer's late English translation. In it Bartók conscientiously preserved the structural rhythm of the triplets but he did not jib at changing the number of syllables of the lines within each stanza:

[...] For

Never shall our antlers
Enter gates and doors, but
Only woods and shrubs;
Never shall our bodies
Wear a shirt and coat, but
Only foliage;
Nevermore our feet shall
Walk on houses' floors[,] but
Only on the sward;
Nevermore our mouth shall
Drink from cups and jugs, but
From the purest springs.

The cogency in the formation of the triplets created through similar means is obvious. What is also characteristic of the passage is Bartók's excessive use of *enjambement*. As if there were some *horror vacui* at work. Wherever possible, Bartók carefully avoids grammatical stops at line end. In this respect the English translation significantly differs from the Hungarian and sharply contrasts with the Romanian original. At the same time, his main con-

5 ■ Here the passages are reproduced according to the formula copies now in the Budapest Bartók Archives (BBA).

cern could well have been a metric one. Through putting unstressed pronouns and particles at the end of lines he manages to create a trochaic metre. This closely corresponds to what Bartók reported on his translation experiments from the Romanian in general. He wrote in a letter to Wilhelmine Creel, his former pupil, that he had tried to translate some of the Romanian verses in the original metre. He also commented on his translations saying that the syllables—particles, that is—like “oh”, “I”, etc., should have been placed at the beginning of the next line but he had deliberately placed them at the end of the lines in order to create “a semblance of trochaics, the original metre.”⁶ Along with this letter Wilhelmine Creel received a copy of the English translation of the *Cantata* libretto as well.⁷

A further stylistic device employed again and again throughout the translation is the pairing of synonyms or other related words. Such a doubling of objects also plays an essential part in the closing triplets: “gates and doors”; “woods and shrubs”; “shirt and coat”; “cups and jugs”. Bartók’s handling of the text once more reveals his primary concern with metre and rhythm.

One peculiar element in Bartók’s libretto, though, raises questions regarding content. This aspect of Bartók’s text which has deservedly attracted special attention is the composer’s use of the Romanian word “*punte*”, spelled thus in the early copies of *colindă* 4a, interpreted as meaning “bridge”

(“*híd*” in Hungarian), an undoubtedly significant word in Bartók’s vocabulary, that he used to describe symmetrical formal schemes. According to the documents, it is conceivable that Bartók only amended this reading to “*p’unde*” (where) at the time he was preparing the second version of the *Colindă* book. Namely, the correction only appears in the London MS and must have been inserted after Bartók received it back from Oxford University Press in February 1931. However, what is essential here is, once again, that Bartók carefully developed this element of the text. It simply reads in the Romanian libretto as:

Atăta și-au vânăra
Punte și-au d-aflat,
Urma de cerb mare.

Following Bartók’s possible reading these lines can be rendered something as follows:

So long did they hunt
(Till) they found a bridge,
The track of a great stag.⁸

Interestingly enough, as already referred to in connection with the later insertions in the “*Urllibretto*”, Bartók extended this moment in the description of the father’s ensuing hunt.

Punte și-a d-aflat.
Ce mai [și]-a d-aflat[?]
Urma de cerbi mari
de Nouă cerbi de munte.
(He found a bridge.

6 ■ Enclosure to Bartók’s letter of 17 December 1944 to Wilhelmine Creel. Photocopy in the BBA. The letter itself has been published in *Béla Bartók’s Letters*, ed. János Demény, Budapest 1971, no. 181.

7 ■ A different copy of the same translation, containing a few corrections in the hand of an unknown acquaintance of the composer, was sent on 29 September to the Kecskemétis and referred to as the first product of his career as an English poet, see *Béla Bartók’s Letters*, no 278. This must be the copy reproduced in the same volume and in several later publications. The copy reproduced here, to my knowledge for the first time, is a later one.

8 ■ Bartók’s translation into German of these lines, although repeatedly revised in the MS, very well compares with this English rendering: “Sie jagten so lange, / «Dass» (Bis) sie «eine Brücke gefunden» an eine Brücke gelangt sind: / Zu den Spuren eines grossen Hirsches.”

What else did he find?
The track of great stags,
of nine mountain stags.)⁹

Quite logically Bartók carefully elaborated these passages in the different Hungarian versions of the libretto and, however bare the wording, he included them in his only German translation prepared for publication in the Universal Edition score.¹⁰

In the late English rewriting the case is somewhat different with these passages. In the account of the first hunt, that of the sons', Bartók still preserves the word "bridge", although, at the same time, he considerably lightens the emphasis on it by inserting the "brook", creating one of the text's poetic word pairs.

There they hunted till they
Found a brook, a bridge, and
Trace of wondrous deer.

When describing the second hunt, however, Bartók now avoids any mention of the bridge. Moreover, he does not even appear to care for the insertions at this point.

There he found the brook and
Trace of wondrous deers.

The lack of "bridge" here could have resulted from constraints in syllable number. It can, however, be also due to the fact that this time Bartók returned, partly at least, to the original Romanian wording instead of preparing a translation of his Hungarian poem. Concerning this, it appears even more significant that he still does not seem to be willing to exclude the delicate word altogether. Moreover, in both passages he uses the expression

"wondrous deer", a rendering of the Hungarian "csudafiúszarvas" a term frequently appearing in the equivalent genre of Hungarian folklore, the *regős* song, as Bartók expressly points out in his scholarly introduction to the relevant volume of his *Rumanian Folk Music*.¹¹

The infiltration of all these different and partly changing elements into the text reveals a clear tendency towards enrichment so that it can represent more than what the original folk songs can, a poetic text of a higher order and a genre not confined by the borders of any one people. At the same time, the composer's interference with the wording contributes to the libretto's breaking with the original text, as it seems, once and for all.

There is one problem lingering that cannot be left unmentioned. As it now appears, it is far from clear what language Bartók originally intended to use in his *Cantata*.¹² After all, he did try to provide for a Hungarian translation before the actual composition. Yet it is also a fact that he started to compose on the basis of the Romanian text only. Later, however, he completed the composition in a bilingual form and, finally, he decided to suppress the Romanian text altogether in 1932, when preparing a fair copy of the work. Whether it was political reasons and national tensions that made him give up the original libretto or, whether it was the eventually much more developed Hungarian-language text that somehow invalidated the necessarily "underdeveloped" first Romanian version, can be left undecided. But he must have begun to feel

9 ■ Again this translation follows closely Bartók's German version as well: "Und fand die Brücke. / Was sonst fand er? / Die Spuren von großen Hirschen."

10 ■ Unfortunately, it proved impossible to include here discussion in any detail of the rather complicated evolution of the Hungarian libretto. This would deserve a separate study.

11 ■ Béla Bartók, *Rumanian Folk Music*, vol. 4, ed. Benjamin Suchoff, The Hague, 1975, p. 209, note 13.

12 ■ For specialized literature on this and on most of the issues raised in this article, the reader may consult my study referred to in note 3 above.

more and more attached to the text in his own words.

At least something of an ambivalence towards the text seems to be palpable again and again when Bartók makes ostensible efforts to preserve, as it were, the "authenticity" of the libretto. First, when sending his already extended Romanian compilation to Constantin Brăiloiu, the renowned Romanian ethnomusicologist, asking him to check it, and later on when he stipulates the printing of his word-by-word German translation with the score. Although he himself accepts Bence Szabolcsi's much richer versified rendering, his German version appears to have been intended to preserve the "authenticity" of the libretto as based on folk texts. On the other hand, however, at the end of his life, he himself puts into English almost all the "unauthentic" poetic ornaments and additions that had partly been "read into" the ballad text and partly been invented when gradually shaping the Hungarian translation.

And here it is appropriate to discuss briefly one last important break in the evolution of the composition of both text and music that involves Bartók's significant revision of the libretto as a whole.

The most remarkable deviation from his sources, a deviation that, at the same time, can be regarded as a most surprisingly faithful handling of them as well, is the inclusion of the appended textual recapitulation. Its faithfulness lies in the fact that the composer thus manages to include both texts in however amended a form. He has done this, on the other hand, rather unfaithfully to his sources in that,

through the recapitulation, some kind of a "moral" to the poem—evanescent, if at all present, in the original text—is now unmistakably emphasized. The recapitulation is not only missing from the "Urlibretto" but also from subsequent copies of the text both in Romanian and Hungarian. Furthermore, work on the composition itself seems to have temporarily been broken off exactly where the original story, its first narration in the libretto, finishes.¹³ It is conceivable therefore that Bartók hit upon the idea of including a textual recapitulation at a relatively late phase of composition.

All in all, however much he was guided by his sources, it is fairly clear that Bartók's way was one of departing ever further from both of the original texts. His interference with the formation of the text was generally limited in the case of other vocal compositions. In this case, however, somewhat similarly to his technique of employing folk melodies and even motifs derived from folk songs in decidedly art music compositions and exploiting their latent possibilities, he went ever further from his text sources, not only as a result of his setting them to music, but also in the process of shaping his very personal, or even confessional, poem. Or, the other way round, Bartók's treatment of the text can be interpreted as an ever more profound penetration into what the composer must have considered the "spirit" of the chosen folk ballad. In any case, the story of Bartók's *colindă* libretto leaves little doubt that, much as the hunter's sons do, the text itself underwent a wondrous metamorphosis of its own. ■

13 ■ On this question see especially p. 289 in my study.

György Réti

Hungary and the Problem of National Minorities¹

National minorities are a key issue for Hungary. Some five million, one third of all ethnic Hungarians, live outside the borders of the country, and about 900,000 Hungarian citizens are members of national minorities.

In keeping with the provisions of the treaties following the Great War (reconfirmed after the Second) Hungary lost about two-thirds of her territory and about one-third of her population. Of all the national minorities in Europe—if the Russian minorities in some successor states of the Soviet Union are not counted—the Hungarian ranks as the largest, with nearly three and a half million Hungarians in the states that surround Hungary. Nearly one and a half million live in Western Europe, North America and elsewhere.

There are nearly 2,000,000 ethnic Hungarians in Romania; about 700,000 in Slovakia, a further 400,000 in the Vojvodina (Serbia), 40,000 in Croatia, 12,000 in

Slovenia, almost 200,000 in the Ukraine, and some 10,000 in Austria.

The policy declaration of the Hungarian Government formed after the May 1994 elections stated:

For domestic, security, stability reasons and to facilitate co-operation the Government attaches special importance to securing and effectively protecting the rights of national and ethnic minorities. True to its political and moral obligations, as spelled out in the [Hungarian] Constitution, the government intends to pay close attention to the situation of ethnic Hungarians beyond Hungary's border. It considers the assertion of their rights as a special area in Hungary's foreign policy, an important aspect of policy as such and an expression of solidarity.

The government looks on Hungarians beyond the country's borders as part of the Hungarian cultural nation. Using all means at its disposal—and acting in harmony with relevant international practice—the government will strive to bring about for the Hungarian minorities beyond Hungary's borders economic, political and legal conditions and a societal atmosphere in which they can lead a meaningful life in the country of which they are citizens. The government will use its influence to bring about a situation in which the right of ethnic affiliation may be fully asserted in every country.

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1 ■ This is an expanded version of a talk given at the East Europe Conference organized by Italian Pugwash (ISODARCO) at Bressenone/Brixen, in January 1995.

In keeping with the relevant documents of the UN, the Council of Europe and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the government considers as a precondition for the effective protection of minorities, preferential treatment and the assurance of special rights for them in order to compensate for the disadvantages of being a minority. The Hungarian government is persuaded that the attitude of states towards minorities is an important aspect of human rights, and an inseparable part in proper international relations.

The situation of ethnic Hungarians is crucial to Hungary's relationship with her neighbours. There is a need for dialogue with their political leaders and a need for mutually beneficial and wide-ranging co-operation. The goal to be achieved is that Hungarian minorities and their organizations should be able to exercise their rights fully. The government intends to settle present and future problems chiefly in a bilateral manner, but broad international support is necessary. It plans to seek an effective bilateral and multilateral international framework for the protection of minorities. For this reason the European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages and the European Convention on Arbitration and Courts of Arbitration was submitted to Parliament for ratification.

Ethnic Hungarians can only live a meaningful life in the countries where they are citizens if their livelihood is secure, they have the opportunity to improve their lot and if they are not excluded from upward mobility. They must be able to participate in local government and in voluntary organizations. Grassroots politics and the articulation of their interests at the state and parliamentary level are equally important. The Hungarian government—in accordance with general European practice—intends to help ethnic Hungarians to avail themselves of the opportunities offered by local municipalities and the business community, in

specific professions and professional training. Hungarian minorities should be given an important role in Hungary's economic co-operation with her neighbours.

In my opinion autonomy is a suitable and desirable framework for minorities to assert their human, specific, economic and social rights within the country of which they are citizens, in harmony with international law and practice. Unfortunately, however, several states in the region still interpret a demand for autonomy as the first step towards eventual secession.

The Hungarian government supports the voluntary organizations of Hungarian minorities ranging all the way from the arts, scholarship and adult education, to the teaching of the Hungarian language, to religion and to vocational training. It also supports co-operation between Hungarian minority organizations and their counterparts inside Hungary. Young ethnic Hungarians are helped by international organizations to study in colleges and universities in Hungary so they can return home upon graduation.

Hungary intends to establish good relations with each and every legitimate democratic organization, party and representatives of ethnic Hungarians beyond the borders. Their views must be taken into consideration whenever minority issues are discussed with other governments.

The government also stands for an ongoing dialogue and co-operation with the opposition parties and other organizations in Hungary in order to achieve a national consensus on this crucial question.

Hungary feels entitled to financially support the educational, cultural and Church organizations of the Hungarian minorities, their mass media, and to encourage their enterprise culture. This support must be open and transparent. Support should be channelled through democratically elected bodies set up for this purpose.

The co-operation of Hungarians in developed Western countries is important in rendering more effective international efforts to protect Hungarian minorities living in less developed countries.

The Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad co-ordinates all government activities concerning Hungarian minorities: this office formulates minorities policy, fosters relations with the organizations of the Hungarian minorities and represent the government in various international organizations.

Hungarians are as a rule devoted to their language, to their customs and to their national identity. This is well illustrated by the fact that in the more than seventy years of life as a minority and despite all the tribulations of history, their numbers have not significantly diminished.

In the last five years, as a consequence of the political changes in Central and Eastern Europe, better opportunities have arisen for minorities in politics and economic life. At the same time, in some countries, nationalistic tendencies which were previously more or less muted have emerged among the majority. In many cases, the minorities' cultural and economic activities, and even their very existence, have elicited phobias.

Hungarian minority organizations have nowhere sought a revision of borders, but have urged the creation of local government or local autonomies to guarantee equal opportunities and the survival of national identity, language and culture.

Hungarians outside the country

In Slovenia and in Croatia, the small Hungarian communities enjoyed all the political and cultural rights that a minority should have. The civil war in former Yugoslavia has caused great problems, forcing many Hungarians to flee to Hungary. At

the time of going to press, great numbers of Serbs, fleeing the Krajina re-occupied by Croatia, are being settled in the Vojvodina, upsetting previous ethnic proportions to the detriment of the original Hungarian population there. That situation is of grave concern to Hungary. Hungary has signed agreements on minorities' rights with both Slovenia and Croatia.

The 1994 agreement between Hungary and Croatia details the minority rights spelled out in the Hungarian-Croatian Basic Treaty signed on December 16, 1992.

This agreement, in keeping with international and European documents and the signatories' domestic legislation, guarantees the rights of minorities to preserve their cultural, linguistic and religious identity, to establish and manage educational institutions on all levels, to use their own language in public and private, to receive and impart information in their language (including the mass media), to worship in their language and to maintain the sites and monuments significant to them.

The agreement guarantees the right of individual members of the national minorities to take an effective part at national, regional or local level in decisions that affect the minorities to which they belong. Minorities enjoy freedom of assembly and association which allows them to maintain their ethnic and cultural identity. They have a right to establish unhindered and direct contacts across frontiers with foreign citizens with whom they share a cultural and linguistic identity and, also, with the institutions of their state.

The signatories expressed their firm intention that, with the help of the international community, they will help refugees to return to their homes in occupied Croatian territories, in order to restore the pre-1991 ethnic proportions.

■ In the Vojvodina, formerly an autonomous province in Serbia, conditions for

the some 400,000 ethnic Hungarians were gradually normalized after the Second World War. In recent years, the civil war and the revival of Serbian nationalism has put an end to their relatively favourable position. Provincial and local autonomy was abolished, institutions have had their scope curtailed. The proportion of war casualties suffered by Hungarians of this background was conspicuously high. One can only hope that with the end of the civil war, the former favourable situation of the Hungarian minorities will be restored.

■ In the Ukraine, the conditions under which Hungarians live as a minority in the Sub-Carpathian region adjacent to Hungary have improved substantially since the Ukraine has become independent. The 1991 Hungarian-Ukrainian Declaration on the Rights of National Minorities has set a positive example for recognizing national minorities as organic components of the statehood of the country they live in. A joint committee has been established to supervise the fulfillment of the declaration.

■ The small Hungarian community in Austria which is in the best position economically, enjoys all the rights due to a minority.

■ Slovakia became a separate state in 1993. The constitution defines the country as a national state with one national language. It also states that the rights of minorities must not infringe on the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic.

A memorandum by the representatives of the Hungarian minorities in Slovakia argues that the Slovak constitution does not guarantee the right of minorities to their ethnic identity, and offers no protection against forced assimilation. Their political parties may be dissolved at any time. All this is evidence of distrust and fear in their relations with the nearly 700,000 strong Hungarian community.

In the 1994 elections, a coalition of the three Hungarian parties obtained 10,2 per

cent of the popular vote and became the third largest group in parliament.

Although there are many elementary schools where Hungarian is the language of instruction, there are 130 villages with a Hungarian majority where no such schools exist. Hungarian headmasters are being dismissed by the dozen. There is no Hungarian university in Slovakia and the only Hungarian *gimnázium* is in difficulties. Slovak Radio broadcasts 36 hours of Hungarian language programmes weekly, Slovak TV 25 minutes a week. There are two professional and a great number of amateur Hungarian theatre companies. One daily, and a number of periodicals are published in Hungarian.

A political battle has ranged over the use of Hungarian place-names in Slovakia. Under a law passed in 1990, their use has been prohibited; however, July 1994 legislation has once again made the use of Hungarian names possible.

In March 1995 the two countries signed a basic treaty providing for the protection of minority rights, in keeping with the recommendations of the Council of Europe. One of these, Recommendation No. 1201, stipulates that minorities may create "autonomous authorities" in accordance with the domestic legislation of the state in which they live. The treaty confirms that the signatories respect the inviolability of their common border and have no claims on one another's territories. Ratification of the treaty by Slovakia is still ahead.

■ In Romania, according to the latest census (conducted under the Ceausescu regime) the number of Hungarians (who live mainly in Transylvania) was 1,651,000; reliable sources set the figure higher, at about two million. This is one of the largest national minorities in Europe.

In the euphoria following the events of December 1989, the new government of

National Salvation declared equality before the law of national minorities and the Romanian nation, underscoring the right to use their native language freely, to an education in their native language at all levels, and it even mentioned the reopening of the Hungarian university in Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca. However, a memorandum by the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) on Romania's admission to the Council of Europe stated that the "rights enumerated in this declaration have not been guaranteed by any law and have not been put in practice yet... Deprivation of basic human rights creates a disadvantageous situation for minority citizens in every field of social life, education, jurisdiction and administration..." This document contains fifteen points in which the RMDSZ's objections concerning Romania's legal system are expressed and a further thirteen in which proposals for changes are put forward,

The Romanian constitution of 1991 states that Romania is a national state, and that the only official language is Romanian.

Hungarians in Romania complain about being particularly concerned about economic discrimination (in redundancy lay-offs, in issuing entrepreneurial licenses, participation in privatization, etc.) and about the refusal to create a multi-tier educational system with Hungarian as the language of instruction. The Hungarian university and the Hungarian consulate in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár) were closed by Ceausescu and have remained closed to this day.

There are many schools, state and church, elementary and secondary, teaching in Hungarian, but according to the RMDSZ's memorandum, "an independent educational system (from nursery school to university) adequate for the needs of approximately 2 million Hungarians does not exist in Romania".

In 1994 there were approximately 1,000 students from Transylvania studying in Hungary; their diplomas are not recognized in Romania.

There is one opera house and five Hungarian theatres in Romania, all in a very bad financial situation.

The Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania has grown into a significant political factor. After the latest (1992) elections, its 27 deputies and 12 senators made it the second largest group in the Romanian parliament. Nevertheless, Hungarians have frequently had their civil rights violated, and have even been attacked physically.

In Romania there are some political forces that wish the state to be an instrument of nationalism. In his *National and Ethnic Conflict—Threats to European Security*, Stephen Ivan Griffiths writes: "However, there is a great deal of evidence that over the past two years inter-ethnic relations in the region [Transylvania] have polarized dramatically and that much of the trouble has been caused by Romanian extremists working with the 'approval' of seemingly compliant officials. Following the violence in Tîrgu Mureş in 1990, which claimed the lives of some 30 people, the extreme right-wing organization Vatra Românească has been involved in more reported incidents designed to raise the level of nationalist hatred in Transylvania."

On February 1st, 1995 Hungary was among the first signatories to the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe, which stipulates protection for national minorities. That reflects her special concern and the importance she attaches to the international codification of minority rights.

Members states of the Council of Europe who are in Hungary's immediate neighbourhood (and thus Romania and Slovakia) signed the convention. Hungary looks on this as another way of bringing

the life of Hungarians in the neighbouring countries closer to international norms.

Talks on a basic treaty between Romania and Hungary have been going on for months but, at the time of writing, Romania is still refusing to accept Recommendation 1201 of the Council of Europe on minority rights and this seems an insurmountable obstacle to an agreement. The present writer, being an incurable optimist, hopes that, whenever the signing of a basic treaty with Romania occurs, it will signify, together with the Hungarian-Slovak treaty, the beginning of a process that could be similar to the historic reconciliation between France and Germany. That is what the region so badly needs.

Minorities in Hungary

According to the 1990 census and the estimates of minority organizations, of the 10.3 million inhabitants of Hungary, about 200,000 are ethnic Germans, 110,000 Slovaks, 80,000 Croats, 25,000 Romanians, 25,000 Serbs, 20,000 Slovenes, and 500,000 Gypsies. These minorities are scattered across the country's 19 counties. Urbanization and auto-assimilation in the past have led to a disruption of many traditional minority communities.

The Hungarian constitution states that ethnic minorities "are constituent elements of the State" and "have their share in the power of the people." The constitution provides for the collective participation of minorities in public life, in the preservation of their own particular culture, and for a wide-ranging use of their language, in education and in the right to use the original forms of proper names.

After two years of discussion, the Hungarian Parliament on 7 July 1993 passed the Act on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities by an overwhelming majority. The Act was prepared and drawn up

with the direct participation of the Minority Round-Table, on which all minority groups are represented.

Before it was passed, the bill was sent to the Council of Europe which responded positively to it, specifically commenting that the form of self-government contained in it is rare, even in Europe. The Council identified as highly progressive achievements the definition of a national or ethnic minority, the principle of free choice of national identity, the regulation of collective rights of minorities and cultural autonomy based on the individual.

This is indeed a comprehensive piece of legislation, covering as it does fundamental provisions, individual minority rights, collective rights of minorities, the self-government of minorities, local spokesmen (ombudsmen) for minorities, cultural and educational autonomy, use of minority languages, financial support, economic management, and assets of minority self-government.

The objective of the act is to identify and create conditions under which the auto-assimilation process can be halted and reversed. This assimilation is due to the fact that in Hungary, minorities—except some Gypsy communities—are scattered practically across all regions of the country, usually living amid a substantial majority of Hungarians. Under such circumstances, it is extremely difficult for an educated class to develop within a minority, in a specific language and culture. Therefore the fundamental principle is related to the active protection of minorities, in helping to preserve their identity.

The survival and progress of national and ethnic minorities, the reduction of inequalities between the majority group and the minorities, and the lessening of other disadvantages, all require preferential treatment and special rights to which communities, just as much as individuals,

are entitled. These rights are covered by Act LXXVII of 1993 on the Rights of National and Ethnic minorities. Implementation of this Act is treated as a priority by the present Government.

The Government stands for positive discrimination vis-à-vis national minorities. Each individual member of an ethnic minority has the right to special treatment. The status of national minorities should not depend on how the rights of ethnic Hungarians outside Hungary are honoured. In this question the Hungarian government rejects the principle of reciprocity.

No suitable form of parliamentary representation for national minorities has as yet been found, this is the single important negative feature since the first democratic elections in 1990. The appointment of a minority ombudsman by parliament has happened recently.

The country tries to provide adequate conditions for minority nursery schools, teaching in minority languages in elementary and secondary schools, tuition in institutes of higher education, the provision and operation of libraries and other cultural institutions, the training of minority teachers and the supply of textbooks and teaching aids needed in minority education. State subsidies for these purposes, based on the principle of preferential treatment, are guaranteed.

Right now there are 295 minority kindergartens in Hungary, with about 14,000 children receiving education in their native language. There are about 320 eight-year primary schools offering education in the language of the various minorities alongside tuition in Hungarian. There are seven specialized minority secondary schools, of which three are German and the others are Serbian, Croatian, Slovak and Romanian.

Every minority group has at least one weekly publication. Hungarian Radio broadcasts a 20 minute programme daily

in each minority language, half-hour programmes weekly for every minority and there are special televised magazines every week.

Hungary promotes the exchange of teachers, students and cultural assets; mutual recognition of educational qualifications with the mother countries of the national minorities in Hungary is also sought and promoted.

The use of the minority language in all church activities is supported. Only approximate data are available on the affiliation of minorities. Ethnic Germans and Slovaks, Croats and Slovenes are predominantly Roman Catholic. Serbs and Romanians are mainly Orthodox. Gypsies usually have the same affiliation as the majority population surrounding them.

The 1993 Act on the Rights on National and Ethnic Minorities states that "persons belonging to a minority have the right to observe minority traditions related to the family, to maintain family relations, to observe family celebrations and the related religious ceremonies in their native language, and to demand this right." (Chapter II, Section 11).

The most problematic minority for Hungary is the approximately half million Hungarian Gypsies, who have been particularly hard hit by the economic crisis and recession of the past fifteen years and by growing unemployment. (Gypsy organizations put the number of Gypsies in Hungary at 800,000 or 8 per cent of the population.) Both the government and outside specialists agree that this involves complex and special duties for the government. Also involved are the development of an awareness of ethnic identity and the putting in place of employment-related and welfare programmes. The Gypsies are not considered as just another minority, but as a social group requiring particular attention. The Government provides forms

of support to Gypsies to help overcome disadvantages in their social and labour market position. Special care is taken to improve the educational standards of Gypsies, and to ensure that as many as possible qualify in one of the professions.

After 1989, more than one hundred Gypsy organizations emerged, indicating divisions within this minority.

The national conference of Gypsy self-government organizations in April 1995 and the election of a country-wide leader was, however, an important step toward unity and cooperation.

Gypsy folk ensembles and clubs have markedly increased in number. Two regular TV programmes, radio programmes and three newspapers are state-financed.

No political party in Hungary has an anti-Gypsy policy; there are skin-

heads who occasionally clash with Gypsies.

On 13th December 1994, alongside municipal elections, the first ever elections for self-governing minorities bodies took place. A total of 639 were elected (423 Gypsy, 103 German, 41 Croatian, 29 Slovak, 17 Serb, 11 Romanian, etc.) The next step must be establishing sound cooperation between these minority bodies and local government authorities.

Only the spiritualization of borders, a positive discrimination policy towards national minorities, and the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights, and of Recommendation 1201 of the Council of Europe and the European Stability Pact, will eventually guarantee a satisfactory solution to the minority problem in this region of Europe. ■

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Károly Kiss

A Programme of Sustainable Development

The main concerns of economic policy today are the problems involved in the transition to a market economy; privatization, the development of a financial and banking system needed for a smooth running market economy, reduction of wasteful state expenditure. Hungary is struggling with a foreign trade deficit, efforts are being made to decrease external and internal debt, to get growth under way. The economic development ideas of the new governments do not, in general, go beyond their four-year term of office. The only long-term orientation is the country's intent to join the European Union.

In the meantime, it is taken for granted that we must follow the road travelled by the highly developed countries: automobilization and a mania for consumption and growth are regarded as the equivalent of development, even though we recognize some of their negative features. There is no need for a long-term economic strategy for, it is believed, a well functioning mar-

ket economy will be a panacea that automatically solves every problem.

Anyone capable of expanding their time horizon beyond a four-year election cycle, and open to the developments going on in the world, knows that the damage suffered by the global ecosystems is so large, and their capacity to support economic growth and to absorb pollution has declined so greatly that, today, even doubling world production seems highly problematic. And this is at a time when the world's population is going to double within 40 to 45 years, and poor countries would like to reach the consumption level of developed industrial societies. A climatic change causing, in all likelihood, a global temperature rise has already started, and there is no end to the variety of environmental damage threatening everywhere.

While in international trade and industry it is still business as usual, important forces are already engaged in several of the world's large scientific centres in working out a solution, the development of a world order and world economy friendly to the environment. (Thus the European Union's White Book, published in autumn 1993, the Concept of "Sustainable Europe", developed by the Wupperthal Institute of Climate, Environment and Energy, or the UNCTAD proposal for developing a world market for pollution rights.) The number of

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international environment protection agreements, fortunately on the increase, indicates that the political elite of the different countries is now aware of the extent of the risks (for example, after three quarters of a year's hesitation and the election of a new president, the United States has finally joined the agreement on biodiversity of the Rio de Janeiro Agreement.) New norms of international behaviour are taking shape and these will apply moral force where the leaders of a given country are not yet ready to commit themselves voluntarily.

Does Hungary, a medium-developed small country, struggling with the problems of transition and debt, lack of balance in the budget, have to be concerned with this topic, that of an environment-friendly economic development? The author of this present article is convinced that it has to, and he is very pleased that since 1990, the National Scientific Research Fund has granted financial support for the third time to an investigation headed by him.

The global climatic change, if it is to proceed, will affect Hungary very unfavourably. According to a FAO forecast published in 1993, the country in Europe heaviest hit, in the long run, by a lack of water, will be Hungary. Precipitation in the Great Hungarian Plain may decline to such an extent as to make the region's traditional grain-growing, and the animal husbandry based on it, impossible. It is, therefore, in Hungary's elementary interest to demand effective measures, and thus strengthen the coalition of countries similarly expected to be affected by the global changes. In such a situation it must itself pursue an exemplary, environment-oriented economic policy.

In addition to all this, the environment-oriented economic development programme worked out by us has several further features which may make it appealing

even to those politicians and economic decision-makers for whom the environment is of no particular value. Through green taxation and a different valuation of energy and natural resources, also the objectives of structural transformation, modernization and traditional economic rationality are easier to achieve.

As things now stand, however, it has to be admitted that such an environment friendly plan for sustainable economic growth has, at present, no great chance of realization.

The socialist heritage

The condition of the environment in Hungary is not as bad as is frequently reported in the West. There are still vast, reasonably well preserved forests and a relatively large number of species and varied ecosystems and habitats. This is because Hungary did not experience the second wave of heavy Stalinist-type industrialization (heavy chemicals following metallurgy) that most of the other former socialist countries did; economic policy, from the end of the sixties, was oriented towards a degree of consumer satisfaction.

The health of the Hungarian population, however, is extremely poor, partly due to environmental pollution. The two most critical ambients are the air of the nation's capital and of the major cities (polluted, among other things, by the intensive use of cars which do not meet modern emission requirements) and the underground waters (80 per cent of sewage is untreated and underground waters are contaminated in most parts of the country).

Still at the crossroads

Most characteristics of the Hungarian economy and personal consumption

are still much more favourable for progress towards sustainability than those of the industrialized countries in the West. The level of personal consumption is much lower and the proportion of throw-away products much less.

The gross per capita energy consumption in Hungary in 1988 was 2,836 koe (kg in oil equivalent), in contrast to 3,789 in Austria, 4,370 in the Netherlands, 4,264 in Switzerland, or 7,902 in the U.S.A. With the restructuring and the recession, this had come down even further to 2,182 koe by 1993.

The number of cars per 1,000 population is only about 200 in Hungary, as against between 300 and 400 in most of the countries of Western Europe and almost 500 in the former West Germany. In 1988 there were only 311 km of motorways in the country, compared to 1,405 km in Austria, 2,060 km in the Netherlands and 1,613 km in Belgium, but their length is now rapidly growing. Until recently, there have been no suburban shopping centres (requiring motor car access) and very few parking garages in Hungary.

In 1991 Hungarian railways still accounted for 45.9 per cent of passenger traffic (in terms of passenger km) and 48.5 per cent of haulage (in terms of goods tkm [tonnes per km]). Hungarian cities still have well-developed public transport systems. (Until recently the Budapest public transport system took up four fifths of all passenger traffic.)

Unfortunately, this situation is rapidly worsening and a brutal spread of consumerism is clearly visible. The government has initiated a highly ambitious motorway construction plan involving foreign capital and offering state guaranteed concessions. Suburban shopping centres and parking garages are scheduled to be built everywhere.

The collapse of exports to Eastern Europe and the general economic recession have resulted in a drastic contraction in railway freight. This is coupled with a sharp fall in the state subsidy for the railways to 8–10 per cent (in contrast to the 45–50 per cent subsidies accorded in the West). As a result, the Hungarian railway system is in its death throes. Freight transport can no longer support passenger transport. Fares are rocketing, the railway has become the most expensive mode of travel, which further contracts demand and, in turn, fares are being raised further, with more and more services closing down.

Public transport in general has entered a downward spiral in which increasing fares have reduced demand and, with higher deficits, fares have had to be further raised.

With the easing of administrative controls, there is a rush to exploit the remaining green belts of towns with newly constructed housing, car parks and hotels; new plants are being built on green field sites too, instead of on old, abandoned factory sites. The speed of agglomeration is frightening. Privatization is endangering the existing forests.

The contracting economy results in contracting state and local budgetary revenues and high deficits. Local authorities are reluctant to impose higher local taxes for fear of losing the local electorate's support. As a result, they are selling their communities' estates. Hence the construction on green belts.

The government's main effort has been to enhance personal consumption; the environment is not a high priority; rhetoric is being used for alibi purposes. Paradoxically, personal consumption is contracting year by year and because of this, the state of the environment has somehow improved since 1990.

Even the electronic media now must operate partly on income from advertising; this results in a tremendous pressure and manipulation to stimulate consumption and push people towards wasteful habits and lifestyles.

This is a critical period, probably the last moments before the possibility of following a sustainable development pattern vanishes for a long time. Hungarian policy-makers have chosen to ignore statements by Jacques Delors, Ioannis Paleokrassas and Magda de Galan, which involve a complete change in priorities at the top level of European Community policy-making.

Development and a steady level of energy use

A theoretically simple but highly practical and operational approach for implementing the principle of sustainability in Hungary would peg the economy to the present level of gross energy consumption. This gives Hungary, as a median income country, a chance to grow, but this growth—at a steady level of energy use—can be considered as sustainable development.

As already mentioned, Hungary's present level of energy use is reasonably low, 1.6–1.7 times less than in most industrialized Western countries. Official energy policy forecasts a return to the previous 1,200 or 1,300 PJ level by the end of the century, while preserving the 1993 level of 1,050 PJ for the coming years.

At present GDP per capita in Hungary is about \$4,000. According to different estimates on a purchasing power parity base, like that of the IIASA (International Institute for Applied System Analysis in Vienna) the figure is about \$9–10,000. This is roughly half of that of Western European middle income countries. The aim should

be to arrive at their level over the next 15 years. This would require a yearly average growth of 4.7 per cent, a rather ambitious but not unattainable target.

If Hungary follows the development path of consumer societies, after fifteen years its production and consumption patterns, volume of energy use and the energy intensity of the GDP will be roughly the same as those currently recorded for Italy, the United Kingdom or the Netherlands.

However, given the very critical state of health of the Hungarian population (largely attributable to environmental hazards) we cannot afford to have the same environmental standards as the average West European country, only 15 years later. To aim for that target would be tantamount to a programme of national suicide. What is needed is a development pattern which results in a much earlier improvement of environmental conditions. (Not to speak of avoiding possible further deterioration.)

There is another important reason to follow a course of radical, environmentally friendly development. This is the hazard for Hungary involved in global climate change. According to all forecasts, there is high probability that the Carpathian Basin will be seriously affected by global warming. Permanent summer droughts and semi-desertification are predicted. As a result, the Great Hungarian Plain, the cradle of Hungarian agriculture, whose forte is grain production and stockbreeding, would be at high risk and the traditional and large-scale production profiles may disappear; thus taking away the livelihood of millions. This is why Hungary cannot impassively accept global pollution. Hungary must be a leading member of the international coalition aiming to reduce drastically the use of fossil fuels.

Preserving the low 1993 level of energy use can only be achieved if patterns of personal consumption and life-style greatly

differ from those of consumerist societies. This implies that, alongside basic improvements and restructuring of production, similar changes are to take place in personal consumption as well. The very ambitious targets for GDP growth and the decrease in energy intensity of the GDP cannot otherwise be accomplished. Additional assistance in reaching these targets would come from energy produced on a large scale from renewable sources.

The need for sustainable structures

In contrast to the generally held belief, technological development and sophistication, and economic rationalization alone are not thought to be enough for the countries of the West to make a change towards sustainability.

The frequent reference to the declining energy intensity in GDP growth is misleading. It reflects the efficiency of the use of resources but not the load on, or the supposed relief of, the environment. The proper measure is the volume of energy used, or pollution emitted. Thus, between 1980 and 1988 the final energy use of the European Community countries increased from 3,348.5 million toe (tonnes in oil equivalent) to 3,508.6; that of the U.S. from 1,222 to 1,282.3 million toe. Indexes of per capita energy use show the same trends.

I agree with Daly or Ekins (using Ehrlich's model) that environmentally friendly patterns and a drastic contraction in non-renewable resource use are indispensable instruments in the move towards sustainability.

In Hungarian transport policy, railways and public transport should be saved and fares should always be relatively cheaper than the costs of using a private car. Fares and all other conditions for transport services should be regulated in a way to favour rail and public transport. Aims for

the development of the infrastructure should concentrate on telecommunication, informatics and waste water drainage and treatment, rather than on building motorways and an infrastructure based on motor vehicles. The bulk of the extremely high volume of transit road haulage (due to the south Slav war) should be directed to combined (rail and road) traffic. The European Union is rightly expected to share the costs of the establishment of this combined transport since it has by far the highest transit volume through Hungary.

In industrial policy, car manufacturing and fine chemicals are highlighted in the government's policy guidelines as key development sectors.

Apart from the fact that cars are the most polluting of products, the Hungarian government has given unjustifiedly generous allowances and subsidies to car plants established by foreign capital. In contrast, the manufacturing of pharmaceuticals is supported by environmentalists as well. It largely corresponds to Hungarian traditions and the availability of skilled labour. However, the privatization of pharmaceuticals shows that some foreign investors' intention is to use Hungarian plants for the pre-final production phase of the most polluting medical products. Consequently, the burden of providing dangerous waste incinerators falls upon the Hungarian partner. This must be avoided. The production of equipment for energy rationalization, for the use of renewable resources and the efficient production of all kinds of energy should replace the present preferences accorded to car manufacturing. The production of equipment for telecommunication, computing and cleaning and recycling technologies would also be welcome.

In agriculture, organic farming and the production of crops for energy should be increased on a massive scale. This would greatly contribute to the full use of unuti-

lized capacity in land, technologies and manpower (due to the loss of former Soviet demand). In addition, Hungary would not find itself competing so heavily with the farming sector of the European Community.

If forecasts are correct, Hungary will be one of the countries most seriously affected by global warming and aridity. If this is so, the general problem will be the inverse of the previous one. (Namely, how to enlarge land and production capacities for the farming sector.) Nevertheless, organic farming will still have a future.

In the production of energy, the present 2 per cent proportion of renewables should surpass the average Western ratio of 2-5 per cent and reach at least 8-10 per cent over the next 10 to 15 years.

Energy production should not increase until the energy efficiency of western countries (in terms of energy per unit of GDP) is reached. Older power stations should be replaced and located in a pattern to allow the many forms and grades of waste heat to be exploited.

The price of electricity and gas is, after substantial price increases, still subsidized indirectly in Hungary. A detailed analysis (Pavics and Kiss, 1993) pointed out that the total hidden subsidies for gas and electricity consumption were as high as Ft300-330 billion. (Compare to that year's budget deficit of Ft200 billion; it was roughly 6 per cent of GDP.)

A development towards sustainability would strongly bear on the spatial distribution of housing and regional development as well. The spread of agglomerations should be stopped. Local activity and self-reliance would boom because of substantially increased travel and traffic costs. Well established towns and villages should have greater autonomy and scope for action.

Employment would be indirectly encouraged by the many changes: less traffic,

more self-reliance, more local and personal autonomy and more intensive use of information technology, and computers would result in more local activity. Self-employment would substantially increase in agriculture, artisanry and many up-to-date services. The labour intensity of organic farming would also increase employment. In general, all these changes would favour a way of life involving self-employment, wide-scale gardening and DIY. As a corollary, substantial improvements would be brought about in the physical and mental health of the people.

Our foreign economic policy is not aimed at rapid integration into the European Union at any cost. (E.g., having to deal with the 800 thousand-1 million lorries transiting Hungary between the EU and the Balkans and the Near East, a flood of imports destroying local industries, etc.) We favour regionalism, self-supply and integration based on information technology and know-how and not on the intensive transportation of physical goods.

We consider economic relations with other countries mainly as the source of imports of highest technology which will serve Hungary's priorities. Nevertheless, the country's extremely high foreign debt will compel us to follow intensive foreign economic relations for a long time.

Changes aiming at technological development and at saving energy and resources are implicit in the traditional form of restructuring and rationalizing the economy, even without a green orientation. The main concern of environmentalists should be creating sustainable consumption patterns and lifestyles.

Energy use of households

A survey of the final energy use in industrial countries shows that the proportion industry uses is sharply declining

while that used by traffic and transportation—due to the increasing use of private cars and a shift from rail to road transport—is growing very rapidly and approaching the figure for industry.

In 1988 the energy used by the residential sector and car traffic together made up more than half of the final energy use in the U.S., Denmark or Germany. Market competition forces down energy use in production, while the growth of energy consumption in motorization and the residential sector seems to be uncontrollable. This is why consumption patterns and lifestyles are so important: this is where sustainable development has the most reserves.

For Hungary, even with its much lower level of personal consumption, this also holds true. Between 1975 and 1992, industry's share of the final use of energy fell from 51.9 per cent to 33.8 per cent, while that of households (including the use of private cars and heating) actually overtook that of the industry rising from 21.2 per cent to 38.2 per cent. Growth indexes reflect these trends: energy consumed by industry in 1992 was 55.8 per cent of its 1980 figure, while energy used by households in 1992 was up by 33.7 per cent over 1980.

The next potential in reducing energy and resource use in personal consumption is consuming more non-material services (like health, education, sports, recreation and entertainments) vis-à-vis the purchasing of goods and products. (Of course, recreation and outdoors sport activities are the most energy and resource saving solutions.)

Energy intensity

We examined the energy-intensity of 89 branches of the Hungarian economy through the input-output tables for the year 1986. Direct energy use was calculated

as a contribution of energy inputs (coal, natural oil and gas, electricity, oil products and gas produced) to gross production. Cumulated energy inputs are expressed in unit of final use.

These figures confirm preliminary expectations: services are much less energy-intensive than the consumption of physical products, both in terms of direct and cumulated coefficients. Thus, one unit of education needs only 0.065 direct and 0.342 cumulated energy use in relation to gross output and final use, respectively. In contrast, the corresponding coefficients for transport equipment are 0.165 and 0.818, for household chemicals and cosmetics 0.198 and 0.926, for clothing 0.463 and 1.170.

Our next research project is intended to construct alternative models of consumption (models of final use), within the limit of a constant level of aggregate energy use. These alternatives can offer politicians and decision-makers a free range of action within the limits of sustainable development.

Green budgets

In 1992 we prepared the first green budget for Hungary (Kiss and Pavics, 1992). This was an alternative to the budget drafted by the Ministry of Finance and presented to Parliament in September of that year. The green budget for 1993 was drawn up only on the revenue side and observed standard principles: (1) it retained budget neutrality by levying taxes on polluting products and activities, and easing income and corporate taxes; (2) resource appreciation was modified: higher taxes were imposed on non renewables while labour was partly exempted of taxes and other charges.

The stress was on (and pointed out in detailed calculations) the use of this ap-

proach to serve many traditional goals which conventional taxation finds rather difficult to achieve, such as making tax avoidance and fraud more difficult, increasing employment (by making labour cheaper relative to other production factors), stimulating economic activity (by lowering direct taxes), lowering welfare losses and social costs (and thus combating inflation), contributing to regional development, etc.

In 1993, based on our green budget of the previous year, the Clean Air Action Group and the trade unions of the teachers and other educationalists drew up a green budget for 1994. This had a highly political motivation, in that it directly aimed to improve wages in the educational sector. "Dirt taxes" were to be raised, directly earmarked for redistribution as salary increases to the unions concerned. (The then leading opposition party joined this initiative, although it meant redistributing some of the extra income it intended to raise for local councils, that aim being its high priority). As a result, the concept of a green budget was killed in professional terms, but it did obtain a quite wide political recognition (in part notoriety).

Macro-economic consistency and financing

In all probability, the technological mix of the sustainable economy will be very heterogeneous: its larger part will be based on manual work, it will dispose of Schumacherian "intermediate technology" as well, but it will not dismiss the most up to date technology either. Small scale investments will probably mushroom. Their specific costs will be much lower than those of the larger investments of regional and national importance, but their number will be much higher.

In consequence, it is difficult to draw any definite conclusion concerning the rate of investment of an economy heading for sustainability. Therefore it should start with the need for a regular, 25–28 per cent rate of investment, in contrast to the present low 20 per cent rate. However, this modest increase should be of a radically different pattern and it should follow the priorities of industrial policy. To comply with those priorities, high tech investment goods should be imported on a massive scale, which will involve serious problems for trade and payment balances, which may well be struggling with large deficits even without them.

Our programme forecasts a yearly 5–6 per cent growth of the GDP up to the end of the century. Since domestic use of the GDP is very seriously limited by the huge debt service and since at least a 3–4 per cent yearly growth of investments would be needed (mainly through foreign investment), the situation seems to be hopeless for the population, eager to enjoy the benefits of a quick economic recovery.

This is the point where an altered, much less energy intensive pattern of personal consumption can help a great deal. In our forecast for final energy use, households take up 33 per cent in 2000, as against the 38.2 per cent of 1992.

Pegging the economy to the 1993 level of aggregate energy use and substantially increasing the share of renewables allows gains in energy imports to be achieved on a large scale. These reach at least one quarter of the cost of financing the foreign debt service at present prices. However, there is good reason to forecast an increase in world market energy prices. Their doubling in the long run could result in doubling energy import savings as well.

Maintaining the high level of direct foreign investment at the beginning—even increasing it temporarily—is a basic condi-

tion for the environmentally friendly development programme, just as it is for the path of consumerist growth. Nevertheless, the variant proposed becomes more stable after a period of some five years, for several reasons:

- (1) A large increase in energy prices triggers earlier and deep rationalization and substitution processes, and is a more efficient aid to the Hungarian economy in resolving modernization and restructuring.
- (2) Energy import savings may result in huge capital accumulation (more than \$10 billion, or even double that amount, by the year 2010). This could make possible either easing foreign debt servicing (if that still exists by then), or achieving a comfortable investment policy, including development projects in health and education.
- (3) Our programme envisages a long-lasting domestic development of information technology, telecommunication, energy production and consumption, the treatment of sewage, recycling, etc., on the basis of importing the highest technology. Resources to be allocated on enlarging the infrastructure for roads and road transport and the import of consumer products should be substantially curtailed. All this could increasingly contribute to modernization and welfare.

Further research

As a next step, the work done so far can be continued by developing and deepening any of its parts. Thus models could

be built for the variants of final use and these could be the basis for government decisions favouring sustainability.

Green taxation also could be further developed with a view to implementing and evaluating interest of, or opposition from, different segments of society and industry.

Such work would need government support, indeed a certain amount of government involvement. However, in the coming years government sensibility will not be high enough for that. It is highly probable that there will not be enough interest and stimulation domestically for accepting and adopting a radical, environmentally friendly policy orientation. The greater probability is that the stronger forces influencing implementation of such a policy will be from outside.

It is for this latter reason that a proposal to continue our work by examining the external conditions for a Hungarian environmental policy has been presented to and accepted by the National Scientific Research Fund. This comprises a possible "greening of GATT" and changes in world trade, the interconnections between environmental policy measures (or lack of them) and external competitiveness of Hungary, the evaluation of the environmental policy of the European Union (including its fifth environmental programme, eco-taxes and levies, harmonization of taxation, environmental directives, etc.) and the consequences for Hungary, its consequences of the global environmental agreements for the Hungarian economy, and the examination of international direct capital movements with a view to their environmental implications. ■

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Melinda Kalmár

Under Western Eyes

Fifties Cultural Policy in British Diplomatic Dispatches

Most sources on Hungarian cultural policy in the fifties either relate how the authorities dictated policy or document rebellion and resistance. In no case can they be regarded as objective reports and, even today, scholars find it hard to overcome old prejudices.

Dispatches from the British Legation in Budapest are a special source of information on this period. They reflect a different partiality, that of outsiders, contemporaneous with the events described, not that of recollections with hindsight. These dispatches are also important because the British diplomats had extensive contacts, were thus particularly well informed, and their analysis shows great acumen.

The selection printed here shows that in many instances cultural policy shifts were recognized earlier at the legation than by the Hungarian public. This was particularly true when, as was often the case, they did not occur in tandem with political changes.

Thus in 1952, the Minister of Culture, József Révai, judged the time to be ripe for

the start of a new chapter in the Hungarian version of communist cultural ideology. The first chapter had covered the period from the communist take-over in 1948 to the beginning of their consolidation of power at the end of 1951. In that period, the communists had managed to gain the ideological and political support of some of the youngest poets and writers. They in turn had been rewarded with status, financial benefits and privileges that poets and writers in modern Europe could only dream about. The poetry of many of these young communists was propagandistic and didactic, unpalatable as art. Until 1951, this type of poetry more or less served as successful propaganda; after that the general public, faced with the reality of economic planning, became increasingly skeptical of their veracity. This period of (classical) "schematic literature" came to a close in Hungary in 1951; in keeping with the intentions of those in power, the theory of socialist realism acquired greater refinement and a more differentiated expression, especially in the writings of György Lukács. The first and most important of these articles of his was published in February 1952 in the writers' periodical and the communist party newspaper. Lukács, exploiting his reputation as a philosopher and his skills as a theoretician, employed a sophism to argue his po-

Melinda Kalmár

*specializes in the literature of the fifties
and cultural and media policies
of the period.*

sition. Marxism, wrote Lukács, allows for the most comprehensive understanding of the world, therefore, this world view also constitutes a condition of the structural cohesion in a work of art. The tension between individual and social existence is overcome in this totality, and individual freedom and communist-communal determination fuse to form a harmonious whole in socialist-realist works of art. This means that, instead of the will of the powers that be, the artist now yields to an inner compulsion in aspiring to create the most perfect aesthetic form possible. (In the sixties, leftist theories on realism in the West did not get much further than this.)

With surprising acumen British diplomats perceived a change in cultural ideology ahead of the political change in 1953, one which relaxed the strict standards set for the original orthodox, schematic literature. In all likelihood, this change was due to Révai, from his youth a follower of Lukács, the region's most respected Marxist philosopher. As a politician, Révai also considered himself to be Lukács's friend. This probably also explains his belief in socialist realism, in the possibility of a literature that satisfied political demands without losing authenticity. His policy therefore differed at times from the way power was generally exercised in the country, he made more concessions and, in so doing, he perhaps created a special version of communist cultural policy in the Eastern bloc.

Only one contradiction is discernible in the analysis submitted by the Budapest British Legation. They considered this new theory self-revealingly sterile and, still schematic. At the same time, they were overly concerned that this theoretical manoeuvre, which they thought was engineered by Moscow, would exert considerable influence on West-European—chiefly

leftist—intellectuals. This extraordinary anxiety shows that thinking in both East and West during the Cold War in the fifties was deeply ideological, although perhaps not to the same degree.

The Lukács article was the theoretical precursor to a debate that took place in the autumn of 1952, the purpose of which was to demonstrate, through criticism of *Felelet* (Answer), the latest novel by Tibor Déry, the most respected Hungarian communist writer, what kind of literature the authorities were looking for. The criticism went over the top and was unjust, Déry's standing as a writer proved unshakable, causing previously loyal young communist writers and poets to rethink matters. As a result, the political change in 1953, when Imre Nagy became prime minister, found both writers and those in charge of cultural matters in a state of considerable uncertainty.

The dispatches of the British Legation in March and October 1954 throw light on the frequent political and cultural policy turns following the 1953 changes. An article published in *Szabad Nép*, the national CP daily on March 15th, 1954, indicates a temporary setback suffered by those supporting Nagy, and the strengthening of the orthodox, leftist supporters of arch-Stalinist Mátyás Rákosi. The writers of these dispatches, however, clearly perceived that, almost independently of the erratic movement of political forces, there existed a steady, complex process, amplified by instability at the top. Its two inter-related features were disintegration in the higher echelons of the establishment and the transformation of literary life.

The leftist political leadership blamed previous errors on Révai. The dismissal of the Minister of Culture meant that cultural policy was taken over by second-rank apparatchiks who were unable to maintain decisiveness in an increasingly complicat-

ed situation. Their methods lacked principle and consistency. At the same time, the young communist poets and writers found themselves in a serious moral and intellectual crisis, as a result of which by the beginning of 1955 they had irrevocably become the Party's internal and implacable opposition. The sense of ambivalence and temporary retreat on the part of the communist writers who still supported the Party created a political vacuum in official literary life; in the wake of this the previously silenced writers of the patriotic peasant trend, and later, though to a lesser degree, also writers with a western orientation, gained considerable ground. By that time the communist authorities no longer had any decisive influence on the changing camps among the writers. In their impotence, they were forced to accept the strengthening of the patriotic peasant school. At the Writers' Association meeting in the summer of 1954, there were attempts to suppress the growing critical attitude that was primarily expressed by them. Party loyalists pronounced works aiming to give a precise description of a pauperized country as naturalistic and anachronistically unartistic.

Conciliation was further hindered by the fact that the heated literary and political arguments at the Soviet Writers' congress in the autumn of 1954, and the ideological discord therein revealed, encouraged Hungarian writers to be more open in voicing their views. This led those in charge of cultural policy to start claiming that there was no need to follow the Soviet model servilely at all times.

The strengthening of the Party opposition and its joining of forces with non-Party writers mainly of the peasant school, led to a constitutional crisis within the Writers' Association in 1955-1956. In effect, the radical communist internal opposition took control of the Party and state

direction of the Association. Accordingly, the Central Leadership of the Hungarian Workers' Party decided to dismiss the writer Tamás Aczél, who was a Stalin Prize winner, from his post as secretary of the Association, and to replace him by an apparatchik. Writers both inside and outside the Party rejected this and made the right of the Party to interfere in the life of an organization of this type a constitutional issue. Nevertheless, in the autumn of 1955, before deciding on the secretarial post, the top Party leadership took yet another administrative step. They seized the September 17th issue of *Irodalmi Újság*, the weekly published by the Writers' Association. In protest some members of the presidency and secretariat resigned. In this precarious situation the Politburo decided, in mid-October, to appoint Aladár Tamás, an outsider and trusted Party-man, as secretary to the near-paralyzed organization. Similarly, they foisted a Party worker from the outside on the Association's Party committee. These appointments, however, never became official, partly because in November 1955 writers, journalists and artists sent a memorandum to the Central Leadership with their objections to these measures, and partly because the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, in February 1956, robbed further reorganization, appointments and countermeasures of any real meaning.

Following the 20th Congress, which denounced the cult of the personality and Stalinist dogma, Hungarian writers demanded, in a four-day debate at the end of March, and in early April, that the personality cult in Hungary, too, be condemned, Rákosi's responsibility for the show trials be acknowledged, and that the Central Leadership appoint a secretary acceptable to the Association to replace Tamás, and that it revoke the appointment of the Party official to the Association's Party commit-

tee. The inaccuracies in the last British Legation dispatch in April 1956 also reflect that by that time political conditions had become increasingly chaotic. This situation had been foreshadowed earlier in the disruption of the hitherto smoothly functioning state and Party leadership, established in the early-fifties, when in the second half of 1953 some Party functions were taken over by the state. Further complicating the situation was that some Party members working in the state administration considered themselves primarily state officials and on occasion came into conflict with orthodox Party leaders. This was why even British diplomats, usually keen observers and with reliable informants, were somewhat at a loss in the increasingly chaotic situation. Tamás was in fact the Central Leadership's original choice to head the Association, but it was not Tibor

Csabai who was proposed in his place, they first thought of Szilárd Újhelyi for the position; eventually Géza Képes, a poet and translator, was selected and he filled this post by consensus until the end of 1956. The Politburo of the Hungarian Workers' Party wanted Csabai on the Association's Party committee, but at its April meeting the membership rejected Csabai on a motion by Gyula Háy and Gábor Devecseri. At this meeting, the nomination was withdrawn and Mihály Gergely, a writer and member of the Association, was elected to fill the position instead of the outside delegate.

British diplomats, however, correctly observed that the growing tension in the general political situation forced those in charge of cultural policy to make concessions, while radical opposition writers suffered no harm. ■

Five Documents 1952–1957

1

(1682/39/52)

Confidential

Dear Department,

BRITISH LEGATION
Budapest
15th February, 1952

One of the many roles which Moscow likes to assume to trap the unwary in the West is that of the defender of culture. While simple peasants and workers storm the Bolshoi Theatre to hear Shakespeare, American gangster films and murder stories, so the story goes, flood the markets in Western Europe and undermine youthful morals. This particular line of argument is not very effective in the countries overrun by the Red Army where the Russian soldier did not exactly distinguish himself for his interest in culture, but it has a certain appeal in Western Europe, particularly amongst intellectuals who have revolted against the more extreme forms of American "culture".

Nothing would, however, be more calculated to disillusion this group of people than a closer examination of Russian and Communist cultural ideals. In this connection György Lukács may, quite unintentionally, have done some service to humanity

by revealing in a recent lecture on "Schematic Literature" to the Hungarian Federation of Writers¹ the essential barrenness and artificiality of the Communist literary ideal.

Hitherto literature in Communist Hungary has been paralysed and stifled by the iron hand of the Party. Imagination, thought and feeling even of the most innocuous, unpolitical nature have been checked, since literature, it is maintained, must be a weapon in the fight for Communism. A book which does not actively promote the Communist Idea is useless and even dangerous since it may distract the reading public from the final goal—the achievement of Communism. The effect of this policy has of course been disastrous, here as elsewhere in the Soviet Orbit. Authors have either remained in stunned silence, or else, less honest, have tried to interlard their writings with unconvincing passages of political content. Another set of writers, the young Communist authors², have written completely unreadable and ludicrous novels in which the Party Secretary and the kulak move stiffly through the leaden pages paraphrasing the leading articles of "Pravda" and "Szabad Nép"³.

The Party leaders whose grip on the material life of the country is unchallenged, are thus confronted by a humiliating failure, they are unable to create a "Socialist Realist" literature. György Lukács, a foolish old man of wealthy Jewish stock who was a People's Commissioner for Education under Béla Kun⁴ and is now a member of the World Peace Council, still has certain influence in Hungarian intellectual circles. He was therefore chosen to enunciate the latest Party line on literature. The remedy which has been selected is not to lighten the political dictatorship over literature but to strengthen it. "Contrary to what many people think," he said, "the weakness and illness of our literature may be traced back to a lack of ideological content." Some, it appeared, wrongly considered that "the arty nature of literature had had a detrimental effect on the rich description of living forms", and others expressed the heretical doctrine that it was possible in literature to separate politics from private life. This leads Lukács to utter one of his greatest pearls of philistinism:

"Above all: private life independent of public life does not exist, hence it cannot exist in a corresponding literary description."

1 ■ The Hungarian Writers' Association was founded in the summer of 1945 as the single organization representing writers. (Previously, writers had had a trade union.) From 1950 on centralization was applied to Party members, too, which meant that writers who were Party members were required to join the Association's Party organization. One result of this decision was that writers were not isolated from one another in the fifties; indeed, they were forced to be together, thus embroiled in constant arguments. In other words, contrary to the intention of the authorities, Party life in the Association functioned as a real forum of public political life. Membership in the Association was not compulsory.

2 ■ The young poets and writers supporting the Party's cultural policy, mentioned in the British dispatches, were Ferenc Juhász, Lajos Kónya, Ferenc Karinthy, Imre Sarkadi, Gábor Devecseri, Géza Molnár, Miklós Gyárfás, Zoltán Zelk, László Benjámin, and Tamás Aczél.

3 ■ Journals mentioned in the dispatches were: *Szabad Nép* (the main Party daily), *Művelt Nép* (weekly of the Ministry of Culture), *Irodalmi Újság* (first a weekly, then a fortnightly of the Writers' Association), *Csillag* (a monthly periodical of the Writers' Association).

4 ■ Béla Kun, the Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919, was the de facto leader of the dictatorship.

Having dealt this knock-out blow at life and literature, Lukács then proceeds to outline the principles of the only possible form of literature—"Tendenz literature" which finds its "highest expression in Socialist Realism", and "without which literature never existed and never could exist". Such literature consists in "portraying the conscious transformation (of life) prepared by the Party right up to the conscious execution of a plan of cultural development on which our whole life is founded." In plain language this solemn nonsense means that the writer must take as his theme a Communist plot, fill it with Communist characters, who express orthodox Communist views. This is not, however, as simple as it sounds:

"Our writers must be thoroughly acquainted with Marxism-Leninism—otherwise they will not be able to portray characters who are masters in the subject". In other words the writer must become a skilled Party theorist, otherwise he may find his characters expressing deviationist views. In answer to possible objections that such a portrayal of flawless Marxist-Leninists might lead to a certain monotony in literature, Lukács offered his writer audience a dazzling variety of choice. It was not necessary to write about one Communist only: "If there are three men, if they are all three good Communists working on Party lines, the author can still describe how each individual absorbs and applies Marxism in his own individual way."

It seems hardly likely that any Hungarian authors with any pretence to talent will be able to make much of this latest Party line, even though the harsh reality of the Party muzzle has been somewhat disguised by Lukács' specious arguments. The Party fondly imagines that between the "pernicious extremes" of individualism and "schematism" (the clumsy, unreadable, political novel) a new type of literature, "Socialist Realism", can be created in which the author's role will be limited to that of a Party propagandist. The Party will decide on the themes and the plot of the novel, but apart from that the author will be "perfectly free" to decide how the Marxist-Leninist gems will flow from his pen.

We are enclosing a copy of the extracts from Lukács' speech, reprinted in "Szabad Nép" on 3rd February and suggest that our publicity should do all it can to bring home even more to Western than to Hungarian audiences the fact that Moscow, far from being the defender, is in reality the grave-digger of real culture.

We are copying this letter to Miss Storey, Information Research Department, and Vienna Information Office, for free use, provided no mention is made of the information originating from this office.

Yours ever,
CHANCERY

2

This document is minuted:

This is by no means the first time that the sterility of the Communist literary ideal has been revealed; but M. Lukács' article⁵—together with Budapest's amusing gloss on it—is money for publicity jam. Unfortunately it is harder for us to reach Western than Hungarian audiences.

5 ■ György Lukács's article, "Present position and problems of the struggle against schematism", appeared in the February, 1952 issue of *Csillag*, the monthly published by the Writers' Association.

2. At the same time I think it is only fair to say that M. Lukács's article, in spite of its appalling verbiage, offers a more tenable and a more sincere view of how literature and society should be married under Communism than Budapest's letter might suggest. That is not to say that this view is not mistaken, or that its effects will not be disastrous to creative literature. But there is an attempt at reasoned argument in the article, which (apart from the French, 2 Latin quotation!) shows the traces of that Western civilization which it pretends is defunct. I think there is usually a harsher and even more "schematic" tone in similar utterances from Moscow

Richard Faber
22/2/52

3

RESTRICTED
(1752/7/54)

BRITISH LEGATION
Budapest
March 19, 1954

Dear Department,

An important article appeared in *Szabad Nép* on March 15 under the heading "Some Problems of Modern Hungarian literature"⁶, setting out at length the Government's policy towards contemporary writers. We enclose a translation. Its main features are an attack on the "escapist" conception of "Art for Art's sake" in literature and a reaffirmation of the view that a writer must be the servant and mouthpiece of the Party and Government.

2. In some respects the article is frank and well balanced. It sets out, for example, the major objections that most writers advance against government control of literature, e.g. "that State direction will render literature merely a bureaucratic form of the execution of policy", and it condemns those who "would like to reduce 'freedom' in literature to the propagation of political tenets". This concession to the writers' point of view is, however, only a prelude to a detailed statement of the duties of writers, and of the form that their writing is to take. These points may be summarised as follows:

- (a) The past must not be described except in such a way as to contrast its misery with the happiness of the present. "The description of history for its own sake [is] nothing else but a protest of the petty bourgeois against the progress of our people." "The best of all themes is the present."
- (b) Writers must have a firmer grasp of the principles of Marxism-Leninism and must propound these in their works.
- (c) The writer must be the mouthpiece of the Party and the Government. "A thorough knowledge of the policy of the Party and of the Government is essential in order to avoid mistakes and errors."

6 ■ The March 15th article summarized the Party's principles on literary policy; they called it at the time the Party's literary platform. Several variations were prepared, the first in the fall of 1953. Compared to the vacuous version finally published, the others were extremely self-critical and very skeptical about the chances of maintaining Party influence on writers.

(d) Though "criticism" of the errors of the regime and even of the Party is of course a duty of the writers, it must not overstep the mark. "There is no freedom in Hungary for criticism against the regime of the people." "Within these limits we can and we must create the complete freedom of literary creative work."

3. This article is evidently the crack of the Party whip, and probably marks the end of a period in which writers have been allowed a considerable degree of freedom in the content of their work. The Government resolution of last July, which called for "national unity in literature", and encouraged "criticism" of the Government led (as the article admits) to an outburst of criticism directed against every aspect of the State, and especially against the literature sponsored by the State. During this period the government have adopted a conciliatory attitude to writers who had refused to toe the Party line politically. One of these recently "rehabilitated" authors is József Erdélyi, a well known poet in the thirties, strongly anti-Semitic, who was condemned as a war criminal in 1945. A more interesting case is that of Áron Tamási, a novelist whose works contain a strong mystical and folklore element. He has always refused to give support to the regime, and publication of his works has previously been forbidden. However, even though he still refuses to subscribe to the views of the regime, two of his novels have been published by the State during the last two months and his short stories are now appearing in literary periodicals.

4. The Government has now laid down its conditions for the continuation of this toleration, and writers will no doubt conform. This will be ensured by the procedure governing publication of new works. We are told that before an author's book is accepted for publication, a 60 page summary of the work must be approved, and then during the actual writing of the book the writer must discuss the development of each chapter with the Party member appointed for this purpose by the publisher. It remains to be seen whether those writers, such as Tamási, who have in the past refused to accept the political tenets of the Party in order to get their work published will be willing to continue writing within the limits which the Government have now set down and under the supervision that has been arranged.

5. We are sending copies of this letter to Information Research Department and to the Information Officer at Vienna.

Yours ever,
CHANCERY

4

(1752/19/54)
RESTRICTED

BRITISH LEGATION
Budapest
October 8, 1954

Dear Department,

In your letter No. NS 1752/16 of July 28 to Chancery at Moscow you asked whether the recent ripples in Soviet literary life, described in Moscow's despatch No. 995 of July 2 and various Chancery letters, had been reflected in any of the satellites.

2. These controversies among the Russian writers have been most faithfully reflected here. For one thing, a number of the articles in Russian literary periodicals mentioned in Moscow's despatch under reference have been published in translation in Hungarian literary periodicals, and the whole Simonov-Ehrenburg exchange was summarised in "Művelt Nép". At the same time, the theme of Simonov's criticisms has been taken up

and an attempt has been made to produce a Hungarian controversy on the same lines. In his opening speech at the Congress of the Hungarian Writers' Federation on July 8, Darvas, the Minister of Popular Culture, strongly attacked the current Hungarian trend towards "naturalism"—and towards "pessimism" (the two are hardly separable in Hungarian literature). He mentioned in particular poems by two young Communist writers, Ferenc Juhász and Lajos Kónya. "Művelt Nép" promptly followed this up with a strong attack on Ferenc Karinthy, who had published an excellent straightforward short story in the July number of "Csillag", which was not only naturalistic but "personal". Finally I. Sarkadi published an article in "Irodalmi Újság" in which he defended the novelist Zsigmond Móricz, and was immediately condemned in the next number for supporting a well-known "naturalistic" writer.

3. Some development on these lines might have been expected, even if the Russians had not provided a model, since in the more relaxed political atmosphere over the last year writers have been increasingly reluctant to confine their writing to socialist realism, and the authorities found it necessary to sound a warning on this point in March this year, (our letter No. 1752/7 of March 19) stressing that the writer is and must remain the servant and mouthpiece of the Party and Government.

4. These attacks on "naturalism" do not, however, carry much conviction. The official criticism is half-hearted compared to the Russian tone and it is noticeable that no heads have fallen. Karinthy, Juhász and Kónya are all strong supporters of the regime; Sarkadi is a former editor of "Csillag" and a member of the Editorial Board. None of their positions have suffered. This is in fact no more than a mock battle organised on the Russian model. (It is noticeable that the one really serious recent attack on a writer was made on quite different grounds, though "naturalism" was certainly his principal fault. This was an amusing piece of journalism by Tarsodi,⁷ a staff reporter of "Szabad Nép", condemning the ignorance and lack of initiative of "Szabad Nép"'s reporting and of its editorial board. He described a train journey to Pécs and the conversation of the peasants, who were discussing freely exactly which of the factories in the area were making hand grenades and which were making explosives, etc. This article was condemned (in "Művelt Nép" of August 29) for its "surrealist" style—an inapt choice of accusation, as the article was written in an exact imitation of the style of Petőfi's "Travel Letters".)

5. The promptness and exactness with which Hungary appears to follow the Russian literary lead is almost certainly due to Béla Illés,⁸ who was for many years in Russia as Secretary of the International Proletarian Writers' Association. He returned to Hungary as a Colonel in the invading Russian Army in 1945 and since then, though holding no official position, is popularly regarded as special nuncio of Russia in Hungary in matters literary. He is said to have announced after the war that "Hungarian literature must start again where Mikszáth left off"—i.e., before the advent of the "Nyugat" group,—the school of urban, Western-influenced writers which dominated Hungarian literature from about 1905 until 1945, and during the last few years it has unquestionably been the policy of the authorities to suppress the works of the group. He is also responsible for the attempt

7 ■ Correctly: (András) Tábori.

8 ■ Béla Illés did not play that important a role in shaping Hungarian literary policy. Sándor Gergely, another "Muscovite," was actually the one to maintain contact with the Soviets, and played a far more active role.

to build up "Csillag", "Művelt Nép" and "Irodalmi Újság" into controversial literary magazines on the Russian pattern.

6. Literary controversies borrowed from Russia can however have little meaning here since the problems and developments in Hungarian literary life cannot even be compared with those in Russia. Far more vital here than minor differences between approved writers is the attitude of the authorities to the writers who were already famous before 1945. The work produced by the new Communist writers since the war has failed to gain any popularity except when occasionally (as in the cases mentioned in paragraph 2) these writers produce entirely "personal" work. As long as the older writers were silenced, or writing according to the Party line, Hungarians in general regarded literature as being in suspense—except for those authors who are living in the West and whose work is regarded as constituting an independent and "free" Hungarian literature. (Certain writers were never of course silenced by the authorities: most notable of these was Gyula Illyés, a "popular", or peasant writer of the '30s who, like Kodály in another sphere, was too eminent for the Communists to wish to antagonize. In the last two years he has had two plays produced in Budapest and during Pasternak's brief period of renewed favour in the Soviet Union, Illyés translated his new poems into Hungarian).

7. However, in the more tolerant political atmosphere since July 1953 the authorities have been able to relax their attitude to the older writers,—just as on the political plane the Government have modified their attitude towards Social Democrats and others who a few years ago were regarded as class enemies. The authorities have begun gradually to "rehabilitate" a number of authors who had been regarded till then as politically undesirable. Most eminent among these were Áron Tamási (our letter under reference). This process of rehabilitation has been given fresh impetus by the Government's recent policy of encouraging nationalism and fostering "national unity"—chiefly through a new People's Patriotic Front. Darvas, in his speech at the Congress, made a special point of mentioning the more eminent of these literary penitents. In recent months, S. Bródy, M. Füst, Lőrinc Szabó and Zs. Várnai all of whom have not been able to publish for many years, have published poems or articles in literary periodicals.

8. One of the most startling features of this new policy was, however, the publication in "Művelt Nép" (our letter No. PA/16/32/54) of a poem on his exile by the famous poet Sándor Márai, now living in America. This poem had already been broadcast by Radio Free Europe, and was being circulated secretly here. Áron Tamási published a reply, attacking both Márai's pessimism and his condemnation of the present regime in Hungary, (generally regarded as the price Tamási has had to pay for his rehabilitation), and the Communists have subsequently tried to suggest that writers who deliberately impoverish their own country's literature by going into exile should be regarded as traitors. Nevertheless, this admission that a Hungarian literature does exist outside Hungary represents an attitude which would have been impossible a year ago.

9. As a further extension of this policy of rehabilitation, the authorities have encouraged the publication and sale of works by writers no longer alive which till recently were suppressed. This year's Book Week (which has just ended) was a great success and most profitable to the State Publishing Companies because in contrast to previous years editions of works by well-known and popular Hungarian authors of the earlier part of this century were issued. The books which proved most popular with the public were those by Karinthy (Frigyes, father of Ferenc, see paragraph 2, Krúdy and Móra, all members of the

"Nyugat" group. The most popular of all, however, was a volume of fifty of Tamási's short stories, "Wings of Poverty"—the first edition of 5,000 copies sold out on the first day. These stories were all originally written before the war and are all characteristic of his best style—a strong mystic and folklore element,—very far removed from socialist realism.

10. This Book Week represents a definite capitulation on the part of the Government. The attempt to create a new, purely socialist Hungarian literature has failed and this has now been admitted. This does not mean that there will officially be greater freedom for contemporary Hungarian writers though some measure of latitude will probably be allowed—as in the case of Karinthy, etc. (see paragraph 2), and the change will certainly last only as long as the Government's present policy of political conciliation.

11. We are sending copies of this letter to Chancery, Moscow, and to the Information Office in Vienna.

Yours ever,
CHANCERY

5

CONFIDENTIAL
1011. S

BRITISH LEGATION
Budapest
May 11, 1956

Dear Département,

With reference to our letter No. 1011 S of April 20 about recent unrest in the Writers' Federation, we now have information about a further meeting which took place on April 27. 2. As before, the Party showed its interest in the proceedings by sending Béla Szalai, Márton Horváth and Erzsébet Andics⁹ to preside at the meeting, the purpose of which was to elect a new secretary of the Association. Since the original revolt the secretaryship has been held by Aladár Tamás who was appointed by the Party (Miss Galbraith's letter no. 1011 of January 20). Tamás, as a protégé of Rákosi and chairman of Szikra, the State Publishing House, was known as a good Party man and supporter of authority, and ever since his appointment there has been constant agitation from within the Association for his removal. The Party finally gave way early in April and agreed to hold an election. An official candidate was produced, one Csabai, who is said to be an AVH¹⁰ officer from Eger and is certainly unknown as a writer (it has even been suggested that he is not even a member of the Association, but we cannot check this). This candidate was proposed to the meeting but was opposed in a long speech by Col. Gábor Devecseri, who is a teacher at the Army Officers High School. (He has translated both Greek and Latin and English poetry into Hungarian and is a much respected writer: he was mentioned—much to his pleasure, apparently—in the Times Literary Supplement on April 13.) He demanded that the constitution of the Association should be observed and that the members of the meeting should be allowed to put forward a candidate. One of the members of the

9 ■ Béla Szalai, Márton Horváth, Erzsébet Andics were members of the Central Leadership and directed literary policy between 1953–1956.

10 ■ ÁVH, the State Security Authority, was the dreaded political police of the Rákosi regime.

Praesidium (we believe it was Miss Andics) made the feeble excuse that there was no suitable candidate, but Devecseri at once proposed Géza Képes, who was elected almost unanimously. Képes is the son of a village blacksmith, and is a poet and translator. In 1947 he edited a book of English poetry entitled "The Singing Island". After several years of obscurity during the Stalinist period he was given, in 1953, the position of manager of the "Magvető"¹¹ publishing company. This election has been greeted by the members of the Federation as a great triumph over the Party, despite the fact that in the eyes of the extreme rightwing both Devecseri and Képes are Party men.

3. It is encouraging to find known supporters of the régime standing out against the Party, and this tendency has been noticeable also in a number of articles published in recent weeks, particularly in "Irodalmi Újság". On April 7 it published an article by Tibor Tardos in which he described with considerable vividness the process of accustoming himself to the Party's mental strait-jacket: "Becoming a Party member I learned with pain and dismay what discipline is Slowly I became reluctant to think I told myself 'Don't bother yourself! Other people are thinking instead of you.' I dis-accustomed myself to the real newspapers and to the real radio and I became satisfied with chewed morsels." In the April 28 issue of the same paper, Géza Molnár ridiculed Hungarian writers for ignoring all foreign literature except that of the Soviet Union, and appealed for more translating into Hungarian of current western writing. A remarkable poem by Gyula Illyés on the end of the Stalin cult appeared in the March-April number of *Új Hang*. (We enclose a rough translation.) Perhaps the most remarkable article of all, however, was that published in the April 21 number of *Irodalmi Újság* by Miklós Gyárfás. It is entitled "Literary Dogmatism" and demands in no uncertain terms the release of literature from Party direction and Party control. It makes a strong plea for independent thinking and humaneness and condemns Zhdanov's views on realism. We enclose a translation of this also.

4. It seems clear that the authorities are being obliged to allow increasing freedom to the members of the Association, not only in matters of organisation but also in what they publish, though in published material they are still no more outspoken than the Czech writers whose speeches are described in Prague despatch No.65 of May 2. It is worth noting here also that none of the leaders of the regional revolt have suffered any severe penalties despite official statement at the time that they had been punished. Zelk and Déry are still receiving their salaries though their material is not being published, and poems by both Benjámín and Aczél have been published recently. The latter's film "The Bridge of Life", ran in Budapest for a month earlier in the year.

5. Unrest is not confined to the writers, but seems fairly widespread among artists also. At a very recent reception, held at the Institute of Cultural Relations in connexion with the small exhibition here of British commercial and industrial art, a number of outspoken comments were made to the minister on the fatuity of preventing contact between Hungarian artists and their fellows abroad.

Yours ever,
CHANCERY

11 ■ Magvető, the publishing house of the Writers' Association, was founded at the end of 1954, and started operations at the beginning of 1955.

Censorship in the 1980s

Hungary had a dictatorial regime from 1948 until the elections of 1990. On closer scrutiny, however, the period cannot be regarded as uniform. The years from 1948 to 1963 (with the exception of the short period leading up to the 1956 revolution) were years of totalitarianism; the period from 1963 until the dissolution of the system may be regarded as an authoritarian (or post-totalitarian) one. Even in the authoritarian period there were variations in how power was exercised. Thus, the system was reform-oriented between 1963 and 1971; anti-reform trends dominated between 1971 and 1978; finally, the years from 1979 to 1990 may be described as a period of gradually disintegrating authoritarianism, which saw a struggle between reformers and hard-liners (and the appearance of an opposition which was outside the system itself), a surge ahead of the reformers and the ultimate erosion and collapse of the system.

Here I wish to describe the principles behind the regulation of the press and me-

dia as reflected by party resolutions, to examine censorship in the eighties and, finally, to present the space achieved for expression in the eighties.

Normative political expectations

There was no Press Act on the statutes until 1986. The constitution declared the freedom of the press and, at the same time, announced that the leading force in society was the communist party. Naturally these two constitutional declarations were contradictory; it was the unlimited political power of the party which held sway. There was no legislation on censorship because the system did not need it; legislation would have meant a blunt acknowledgement of the limited freedom for the press, and it was easier to exercise party control without legal norms.

The politicians operating within the system often mentioned with pleasure that there was no censorship in Hungary (Aczél, 1980), and they were somewhat taken aback when, in 1981, the writer István Eörsi demanded the introduction of censorship at the congress of the Hungarian Writers' Union, saying that the boundaries would then become obvious and that writers would know within what limit they could write "freely".

The normative expectations of the political authorities concerning the press op-

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The 1959 Regulation of the Press

Publication is seldom limited by legislation. Dictatorships and even democracies prefer more indirect methods when limiting or manipulating the information available to the public. Economic constraints are used, or the mass media are subjected to severe restrictive regulations.

Since 1914 the only comprehensive Press Act in Hungary was promulgated in 1986. After the Communist Party came to power in 1948 censorship was primarily ensured by political and informal means. This situation was changed when, in 1959, following a 1958 Party Resolution, regulations were issued which either abrogated or amended all earlier laws governing the subject. (26/1959. V. 1.) These regulations formally established the conditions for censorship. From then on general political directives were published as Party Resolutions. The Government Decree, in force between 1959 and 1986, and its implementing instrument (Minister of Culture's Decree 4/1959. VI. 9.) precisely defined what was to be considered a publication, what licenses were needed, for what length of time, in how many copies and under what conditions publication could take place. The major aim of the regulation was to establish—in harmony with the Kádár principle of decentralized responsibility—at any time and beyond any possible doubt who (editor, author) was responsible. Nothing could be printed without a signature on the final proof sheets (*imprimatura*) and nothing could be published without a colophon. Both had to be precise and unambiguous. Authors had to sign their manuscripts and printers had to keep a register of all the publications they produced. Presidential Council Decree 1959/17, also dated May 1st, contained the penal clauses related to any offence connected with personal responsibility.

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erated in the form of party resolutions. The basis for the media policy of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) was laid down by a 1958 resolution. This, never repealed by the political leadership, said the "task" of the media was to follow and popularize the policy of the Central Committee of the HSWP. Thus, the press was seen as a means of propaganda, presenting the policy of the party, and its duty was to influence and educate public opinion along the lines expected by the party. The "critical" activities of the press were only needed to attack negative features

which hindered the realization of party policy (Fricz, 1988:9). At the same time, acknowledging the fact that there was indirect direction, showed a change as against press policy before 1956. Individual publications were stated to be autonomous, hence party control was essentially exercised through those journalists who were members of the party. It was mandatory for all working journalists (even those who were not party members) to join the Hungarian Journalists' Association (MUOSZ), which was under party control. Hence a journalist who was not a par-

ty member, and did not conform to the expectations of the party-state, could be taken to task "professionally", or "ethically" through MUOSZ. Only party members could become editors-in-chief, or leading associates of the more prominent papers.

The party resolution of 1958 stated that "the press should be partisan, it should base itself without reservations on the dictatorship of the proletariat, and its standpoint should always be a class stand. Party control should be asserted in the entire press, because only in this way can the partisan stand of the press be properly ensured and the assertion of views alien to Marxism-Leninism avoided." (Jakab, 1987:15).

Gradually, from the mid-sixties, this was worded more mildly, stressing "ideological persuasion" as the main instrument of control (Jakab, 1987:40). By then the party itself was making the demand that the "entire quantity of information" be presented to the public, except for facts whose publication would be detrimental to the national interest. This was expressed even more strongly—as a *duty* to give information—in the 1986 Press Act; since the criteria for the national interest were not expressed in practice, each organ of the state had the authority to decide what information it wished to share with the public, and what it treated as classified or top secret. For this reason the need for comprehensive information and the duty to supply it remained a dead letter. The Hungarian National Bank more than once did not announce the devaluation of the national currency, even though the decision affected the broadest possible range of citizens. (The directorship of the bank may have thought, perhaps with some irony, that devaluation had been detrimental to the national interest.)

The party resolution of 1975 is a good example of the spirit of the anti-reform

campaign of the seventies. For the first time, in addition to the need for "setting positive objectives", it referred to its ideological adversaries, even if these were not precisely defined: "We will strengthen the ideological struggle against bourgeois and petit bourgeois ideology and against the various unscientific world views and we take a resolute stand against the enemy ideas and the malpractices detrimental to socialist public thinking. For this purpose radio, television and the press would also be put to their proper use." (Jakab, 1987:85).

Though never committed to writing, it was commonly known among Hungarian journalists, that they were not supposed to dwell at length upon certain tabooed issues. These were criticism of the Soviet Union, membership of the Warsaw Pact and the stationing of Soviet troops in Hungary, querying the socialist economic and political system and Comecon, and any real assessment of the revolution of 1956. The suppression of the latter was the genesis of Kádárism, and thus 1956 was officially regarded a "counter-revolution".

In addition, some issues were temporarily tabooed for the political needs of the day; these covered a broad range of topics. For instance, there was a time when rather than "poverty" the euphemism "a situation of multiple disadvantage" was used, following party orders, but not out of any desire to be politically correct.

In the eighties, a dual objective was discernible in the party control of the press, and this reflected the struggle between hard-liners and soft-liners within the party. Living standards were falling and the political leadership responded by (primarily economic) liberalization. However, this liberalization simply made the regime's lack of legitimacy even more transparent. State socialism, it turned out, was only acceptable to the broad majority

of society as long as it brought an improvement in living conditions. It was at this time that there was a backlash against Kádár's strategy, successful for a lengthy period, of trying to maintain social peace through material compensation (and primarily to compensate for the lack of political legitimacy).

As the performance of the regime fell off, people automatically turned away from it. Parallel to this, samizdat publications began to appear in Hungary from the end of 1981. These underground periodicals had a very limited circulation, but since they were featured on Radio Free Europe, their uncensored articles reached broader and broader groups. The political leadership was well aware that it could not afford to have a brutal showdown with the emergent opposition groups among the intelligentsia. This would have put into danger the possibility of drawing on the foreign credit needed to keep up the level of consumer consumption (and social tranquility), it would also have destroyed the positive international image the reformist approach of the HWSP under the leadership of Kádár had created through liberalizing the dictatorship. Hence, the objective was to divide the emergent opposition groups and to isolate them within society.

The reformers thought that the one-sided, propaganda role of the press, oriented from the top, should be changed and its mediating function should be allowed to work in both directions. It was the hard-liners who held that, precisely because conditions were becoming more difficult and people becoming more uncertain, direct control of the press needed to be maintained, as an important task of the press was to strengthen confidence in socialism. At that time, there was an open dispute going on in the party about how the press could meet contradictory requirements: those by the political leadership

and the demands of public opinion. (Fricz, 1988: 43–47). The reformers and the hard-liners reacted differently to *glasnost* initiated by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union: reformers demanded further liberalization and even democratization, hard-liners wanted to limit the effect of Gorbachev's position to the processes of Soviet internal policy only, saying that *glasnost* was simply a delayed version of what had already been accomplished in Hungary in the sixties.

As a result of these struggles within the Party, control of the press lost its "principled" nature and what was called "manual control" became typical of the eighties. From the mid-eighties onwards, even party resolutions lost their practical relevance; as a symptom of the disintegration of the system, control of the media was characterized by rapidly changing and often contradictory orders. All this broadened the room for manoeuvre of those working in the official press, and thus accelerating process pluralizing the press was able to get under way. From 1988 onwards taboos, earlier regarded as untouchable, were challenged one after the other. At first the need for Hungarian membership in Comecon was questioned, then the need for reform was increasingly changed to a demand for a change of system. In October 1988, the Publicity Club was founded, which primarily brought together journalists critical of the system. In January 1989, Imre Pozsgay, a minister of state, declared that 1956 was not a "counter-revolution", but, in the new official view, a popular insurrection. In June 1989, when Imre Nagy, the executed Prime Minister of the 1956 revolution was reburied, one speaker at the ceremony demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the country. All the taboos were overturned by these verbal challenges and the Hungarian press in 1989 was dominated by major political exposés. Those repre-

senting the system had nothing left to say: the framework of discourse which they were familiar with and which they used had undergone radical change. (Szelényi, 1992; Pokol, 1993; Bozóki, 1994). The regime collapsed, at first symbolically, and finally physically.

Media control in the eighties

In hindsight we can say that in the eighties signs of liberalization marked the dissolution of the system. The manner in which the press was controlled increasingly moved from normative regulation towards ad hoc interference, which often made conditions for the working press downright unpredictable. However, unpredictability made journalists more and more resourceful—and more courageous—since any adjustment to a “central line” was made impossible. What could be published and what could not increasingly depended on individuals and less on centrally accepted principles. Opportunities for tactical journalism were greatly enhanced.

In analysing these conditions, which were often difficult to comprehend and which had become chaotic by the second half of the decade, István Hegedűs (1988) differentiates between *preliminary control* and *retrospective adjustment*. Preliminary control was exercised in four ways: through the screening of news and information, institutionalized internal information, ad hoc orders and through individual responsibility of editors-in-chief.

The screening of news and information was carried out by MTI, the Hungarian News Agency, which had a monopoly position. Consequently, the servicing functions of an agency were totally intermingled with those of the political authorities in MTI's manner of operation. (Hegedűs, 1988:13). Screening the news was done by

MTI in cooperation with the Agitprop Department of the party and under its guidance. MTI was particularly keen on taking news from the Warsaw Pact countries only from the news agency of the country concerned, and not from any Western source. The comic consequence of this policy was that the public often learned about some event from an announcement published as a disclaimer from a particular news agency. (For instance, when the Soviet air defences shot down a South Korean airliner in 1983.) This “information system” led to sophisticated, sceptical readers, with highly sensitive antennae, who became able to read between the lines, and who received with suspicion, or rejected, any kind of propaganda claims for success. Hence in many cases MTI did not even publish a disclaimer, choosing complete silence instead. Incidentally, the fact that the socialist countries would only take each other's news feeds caused serious problems. At the time of the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe (Spring 1986), the information given out by the Soviets was simply not sufficient for the Hungarian public, trying to get its information from all sources. MTI chose to publish false information with the objective of soothing people's worries, thus discrediting itself even more in the eyes of the public.

All during this time, MTI published a weekly compilation, translated into Hungarian under the title “Articles from the International Press”, with a circulation restricted to editors and senior staff, and which was intended as deep background.

The Agitprop Department of the Central Committee of the HSWP and the Information Bureau (a state organ) also institutionalized internal information. At meetings, held at regular intervals, high-ranking functionaries gave information on the current positions taken by the party and

government. In addition appeals were made to the press on whether it should, or should not deal with certain topics, or, if it was a question of more important domestic and foreign events, a press plan was put forward, which spelt out in what manner and how extensively certain papers should deal with certain events. (Hegedüs, 1988:16). Apparently there were no direct, formal prohibitions; these were expressed in practically each case in the form of requests or recommendations, which, however, it was expedient to observe. The Agitprop Department held a meeting of editors at least once a month, and once a week for the editors of the national dailies (who were members of the Communist Party anyhow); this was presided over by a secretary of the Central Committee (initially György Aczél, and later on János Berecz) in charge of the media.

Alongside institutionalized internal information, ad hoc orders played a major role. These orders were never committed to writing, just as in the case of the meetings of editors-in-chief. Control was mostly exercised by telephone or personal contact. Those in power laid great emphasis on leaving no traces behind them in the particular cases, beyond an outline of general principles.

However, it was the individual responsibility of editors that proved to be the best means of censorship. The appointment or dismissal of editors was carried out at the highest level (Politbüro, Central Committee), and thus an editor depended on the élite of the nomenclature for his very livelihood. The editors of the party's national daily (*Népszabadság*) and its theoretical monthly (*Társadalmi Szemle*) were members of the Central Committee. There was frequent cross-assignment between party headquarters and *Népszabadság*: not infrequently, its editor continued his career in the party headquarters apparatus

and his place was not taken by someone from another paper, but from party headquarters. However, the principle of the individual responsibility of editors resulted, in the case of some politically less exposed papers (economic weeklies, literary periodicals, etc.) in a slackening of censorship along with more room for journalists to manoeuvre in. At these papers, the editor was often closer to the journalists than to the bigwigs in party headquarters and thus he performed his function as a censor to a lesser degree. It frequently happened that he was "willing to take the blame" at party headquarters in the interest of the paper, for articles regarded as more "delicate".

The cultural policy controlled by György Aczél tolerated these anomalies until they acquired political hues. Indeed, one of the main objectives of control of the press was to hinder the publication of politically tendentious magazines. Thus for a decade the efforts of the group of populist writers to launch a journal of their own (because it was deemed politically dangerous) were frustrated, yet the editors of practically all the literary periodicals could be included in the camp of populist writers. It was easier to control them on the basis of the principle of the individual editor's responsibility. Similarly, a request by younger writers for a literary periodical based on their generation was also turned down. Nevertheless, such a circle evolved spontaneously around the literary and sociological magazine *Mozgó Világ*; this those in charge of cultural policy attempted to break up by appointing a loyal editor brought in from outside. The editorial staff, however, supported their former editor (who was also a party member), which led to the dismissal of the entire editorial staff, in one of the biggest press scandals of the eighties. Something similar happened to the literary monthly *Tiszatáj*, published in Szeged, which had temporary-

ly become the place the populist writers were crystallizing around.

Preliminary control was exerted over books as well. The state publishers had to apply for permission from the Publishing Directorate of the Ministry of Culture to publish any book, ecclesiastic publications were approved by the State Office of the Churches, and private publications had to be presented to the Ministry of Culture (in manuscript form). (Kőszeg, 1982)

If some articles, which the political leadership regarded as undesirable, did slip through the intricate net of preliminary control, those controlling the press availed themselves of the technique of retrospective adjustment. The means employed were the following: a lecture over the telephone, demanding a report of justification from the editor of the paper, "dressing-down" after a summons to appear in person, pillorization in front of a professional audience, refusal to pay bonuses and, ultimately, dismissal. (Hegedűs, 1988:32)

Retrospective adjustment was the function of those supervising the press within the Agitprop Department, or of the Information Bureau. However, by the late eighties, both these agencies and the top party leadership were working with less and less coordination; if the censor was a reformer or a conservative, the assessment was different. One politician praised the press, while another criticized it for the very same thing. All this expanded the room for tactical manoeuvre. Hegedűs describes how the four deputy editors of *Népszabadság* rotated weekly and undertook responsibility for the contents of the paper: one allowed more, another allowed less. Thus a journalist with a touchy article would wait for the week when the politically more tolerant editor was in charge. "Stronger" articles could appear one week

and "softer" the following in one and the same paper; indeed, the threshold of tolerance often differed within the same issue. Similarly, articles submitted at the last minute had more chance of being published than those an editor had time to go through. (Hegedűs, 1988:54-55)

This system of control enforced self-censorship in addition to these tactical tricks. No freedom of writing existed in the press as such until 1988. Yet a kind of latent pluralism was able to develop through the readers' ability to read between the lines. In the eighties, *Magyar Nemzet* was the favourite daily of the intelligentsia who were not party members. *Magyar Nemzet* usually did not publish straight-forward propaganda articles or pieces excessively supporting current party politics; it radiated a hidden, though tangibly solid civic tone, which was based on the themes, voices and the views of those intellectuals who contributed to it. In 1988-89, after Kádár was removed, it was this paper which published most of the news about the new parties and movements. This was partly due to the fact that the paper enjoyed Imre Pozsgay's support as chairman of the Patriotic People's Front, and later as minister of state. Of the weeklies (aside from the university weeklies which had a limited readership) it was the reformist economic weekly *HVG*, still using the refreshingly neutral language of the economic technocracy, which went furthest. The monthlies *Valóság*, a paper on social theory which had enjoyed György Aczél's tolerance since the sixties, and still retained its popularity, later *Mozgó Világ*, which managed to slip out of party control (between 1980 and 1983), and *Medvetánc* (from 1982) and *Századvég* (from 1986), launched as university periodicals, were far more critical and radical.

At the turn of the seventies and eighties a new problem was posed to the con-

trollers by the appearance of an underground opposition press, in samizdat form, which did not seek any licence to publish and thus bypassed censorship altogether. In 1979, when István Bibó, the independent political thinker of the greatest influence in the post-1945 decades died, a group of the opposition published a collection of articles (*Bibó Emlékkönyv*) to which several eminent intellectuals contributed. Party headquarters classified these contributors along a scale of political loyalty/opposition; here again the objective was to hinder the development and broadening of an alternative political camp. Consequently, certain contributors to the *Festschrift* did not suffer any reprisal, primarily those whom party headquarters wanted to retain in the first (official) public sphere. Others were summoned to party headquarters, where they were subjected to a severe "discussion". A third group were allowed to retain their jobs but not to teach at university. There were some who—in the next grade of punishment—were removed from their jobs and were unable to find state employment for years. Finally there was a group who had had no job, and who were subjected to official monitoring, having their phone tapped and other methods of intimidation, and had their passports withdrawn. (See in detail, Csizmadia, 1995)

This illustrates well that the Kádár system typically applied the tactic of differentiated repression and social isolation against the opposition. This tactic had been used relatively successfully for some years: those active in the Hungarian democratic opposition did not increase in number and they were unable to communicate their message to the rest of society in the way their Polish counterparts had succeeded in doing. Members of the democratic opposition for years felt that they had been living in a hermetically isolated intel-

lectual ghetto. (See in detail, Kenedi, 1983) Parallel to this, however, those consumers of opposition ideas who became producers of ideas gradually expanded, primarily in the rock-punk subculture and in literary groups forming within the younger generations. What typified them was irony, escapism, ideological neutrality and/or a radical attitude best described as *épater le bourgeois*. (Bozóki, 1988) Although a few rock groups were proscribed, and one singer was arrested, the majority of the new bands were able to continue at the periphery of musical life. (Kürti, 1991) The majority of them were not able to bring out a record until around 1988–89. Péter Esterházy, a brilliant writer, incorporated the words self-censorship into his text, making it visible and hence ridiculous. When he reached a point in a sentence which could be regarded as delicate, he put in the word "self-censorship", then simply continued the sentence. As this was a recurrent motif, reading Esterházy was not unlike doing a crossword puzzle.

All this was already a step forward when compared to the parables with overtones favoured by writers in the seventies. Parables in a historic setting were a typical product of the compromise between intellectuals and the authorities. Taboo subjects could not be discussed explicitly but it was possible to write veiled criticism, taking one's example from the distant past, thus sending messages to one's contemporaries. Some well written parables kept the attention of intellectuals on the boil for months. This was especially when the message was so ambiguously formulated that one could not be sure whether the writer's intention was critical or apologetic. Performances by the Kaposvár theatre that could be decoded, or György Spiró's novel, *X-s* were huge successes because, over and above their dramatic and literary qualities, they were unambiguous-

ly critical. Ágnes Hankiss's essays on Ignác Martinovics, the 18th century prelate executed following a conspiracy, and Prince Gábor Bethlen of Transylvania, as well as Levente Szörényi and János Bródy's rock opera *Stephen the King* were given a more ambivalent reception. Whether Gábor Bethlen, who came to an agreement with the Turks, or King Stephen, who put down Koppány's rebellion, introducing Christianity with fire and the sword, were used to justify the Kádár regime, or to reformulate Hungarian national identity, remained an open question. No doubt the parable had its own masters, but the real skill of the authors and the savour of the genre lay in the ability to wink in two directions, inviting the "conspiratorial" agreement of both the authorities and the public. That is why István Eörsi's tart and "disrespectful" writings that stood apart from the consensus but were nevertheless legally published, as well as the cool "neutrality" of the "new irony" of Péter Esterházy, Endre Kukorelly and others that related to the "existing consensus" neither in one way nor another (but nevertheless fundamentally questioned it) came as a breath of fresh air.

Since the opposition and its followers based themselves on the human rights acknowledged by the Helsinki conference, and pursued a strategy of "self-restricting radicalism", and since its members later became relatively well-known abroad, mostly through the agency of Radio Free Europe, it became increasingly difficult for the political leadership to take stern measures against them. The names of the leading opposition figures were well publicized in the West as well, which provided them with relative protection.

Communist cultural policies, based on differentiated-selective repression and associated with the name of György Aczél (Agárdi, 1994) set up the categories of "Prohibit, Tolerate, Support". Works by

writers committed to socialism and by "progressive" authors (regarded as fellow-travellers) were supported; ideologically neutral works, or writings not sympathizing with the system but having a marginal influence were tolerated; finally, works classified as "oppositional-hostile" were prohibited. This system was not rigid: for "good behaviour" (that is, making gestures of loyalty) a writer could move upwards in category and, conversely, for "bad behaviour" one could move downwards. It happened that some (otherwise frequently published) authors (Sándor Csoóri, István Csurka) were condemned to a year's silence, others were put on a list of prohibited works for a longer or shorter period of time. In addition, those in charge of cultural policy made efforts to widen those fault lines (populists vs urbanists) which had long existed within the Hungarian intelligentsia, with the intention of dividing the opposition and semi-opposition groups.

Thus in the Hungary of the eighties there was no separate censorship office working to a uniform pattern; the practice of censorship was through different—preliminary and retrospective—screening systems. There was always a chance for a "delicate" product to get through, but this could not be counted on in advance. The "soft" dictatorship of the late Kádár era had an indirect censorship which was "velvet" in its operation. (Haraszti, 1987)

The structure of the public sphere

In analysing the changes of the structure of the Hungarian and East Central European post-totalitarian public sphere, Miklós Sükösd (1990) differentiates between periods of "tolerant repression" and "a double public sphere". He regards the former as valid for the period until 1976, the latter for the period between 1976 and 1988.

To describe the first phase, selective or differentiated repression seems to be a more accurate concept than "tolerant repression". For certain topics (such as the interpretation of 1956), and for certain media outlets, regarded as particularly important by the party leadership (*Népszabadság*, *TV-News*), repression remained intolerant up to the end of the eighties; in spheres regarded as marginal (rock and punk music, university papers, art films, certain periodicals of the intelligentsia) creative authors enjoyed greater room for manoeuvre.

Control of the press as a whole—particularly in comparison to the totalitarian period—can be described as "tolerant repression"; however, this did not hold true equally for every paper. For instance, policy-makers consciously permitted certain periodicals to perform a safety-valve function for the intelligentsia, and in this manner a regulated flow of criticism could be maintained. Thus criticism in the official press was almost automatically treated as "constructive criticism", what could not was necessarily classified as "destructive". The system of selective (or tolerant, in Sükösd's term) repression can be described as one of concentric circles, where political control was strictest in the circle closest to the origo (that is the party headquarters), control gradually weakened moving outwards towards the outer circles. Specialist periodicals without political features, published at less frequent intervals and small in readership were in the outer circle. Literary periodicals—due to the traditionally latent political nature of literature in Eastern and Central Europe—enjoyed as much attention as the social science periodicals; control of periodicals of small circulation devoted to music, fine arts, natural sciences or hobbies was quite slack.

The periods of selective repression and a double public sphere, however, cannot be separated from each other distinctly.

Although there definitely was a dual sphere (with the spread of samizdat) from the early eighties onwards, selective repression survived within the official sphere. It was the objective of orthodox forces inside the party to make the availability and resonance of samizdat literature insignificant, and when this failed, republication was prohibited. In the attempt to prohibit any crossover between the two spheres, the very existence of the other sphere was implicitly acknowledged.

What characterized the period between 1981 and 1986 was the dualism of the legal (first) and illegal (second) public sphere. The readers of the samizdat periodicals (*Beszélő*, *Hírmondó*, *Demokrata*) were slowly but surely growing in number, and the proportion of authors publishing in these papers under their real name also grew. The topics, and the critical tone gradually influenced the official press after 1986, which accordingly also became increasingly critical. The grey zone, with its mediating role, which developed around 1986, had an important role in this, as the ideas expressed in the second sphere were brought to a broader public. Members of the opposition received more frequent invitations to address university clubs and meetings organized by individuals acting without official sanction; at the same time, the reformers were also becoming increasingly radical. The reformers inside the party were speaking of the need for "common consent"; this demand took on a critical edge in the party internal struggles. However, by that time it was evident within the increasingly strong "mediating sphere" (and to the journalists who subsequently founded the Publicity Club) that no common consent could be imagined under the given conditions and a "general agreement" with the orthodox wing of the party on the transformation of the political system was simply not possible.

The model of a "double public sphere" became obsolete by 1987 through the rapid growth in the numbers of those demanding political change and through the increasing strength of the mediating sphere that gradually filled the "gap" between the two public spheres. The transformation took place in a way similar to, but incomparably faster than the eighteenth-century evolution of

political publicity as described by Habermas (1993). The dual public sphere (and the latent pluralism of both) of the first part of the eighties was replaced by a public sphere which was openly plural in structure by their end. The latent pluralism of lobbies, interest groups and intellectual camps was replaced by the articulation of politics through a multi-party system. ■

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Árpád Versus Saint Stephen

Referred to Francis Joseph as "another Árpád" was a favourite conceit of the rhetoric associated with the millennial celebrations of 1896. These were held to mark a thousand years of Hungarian history in the Carpathian Basin after Árpád's conquest of the country. The second thousand years were then spoken of in terms that allotted the role of a "second Árpád" to Francis Joseph, Hungary's Habsburg ruler (Fig. 1).

This political sleight of hand was designed to suggest that the Habsburg emperor was a legitimate as well as national ruler. However, this legitimacy during the first twenty or so years of his rule is somewhat in doubt. He was not crowned until 1867, the year of the *Compromise*; even after that a significant portion of the Hungarian lesser nobility continued to deny his legitimacy in particular, and that of the Habsburgs in general.

The opposition of the time liked to describe the town of Arad (where the leading

generals of the War of Independence were executed by the Habsburgs on October 6th, 1849) as the Hungarian Golgotha; the plaque here illustrated, (Fig. 1) imbued with nationalist feeling, is undoubtedly intended to call the legitimacy of Habsburgs into question.

If we look at post-1867 works which express the official attitude, what strikes the eye is that the symbolic figures used to support Francis Joseph's legitimacy had, by the end of the century, been replaced. It is Saint Stephen who legitimizes the emperor's rule until the 1890s; after this date the role is gradually taken over by Árpád.

The changing image of Saint Stephen down the centuries

The traditional Habsburg cult of Saint Stephen is undoubtedly connected with the dynasty's own concept of a Christian ruler. The cult of "sacred kings", as they were called, is not uncommon in the West either.

The protagonists of the Hungarian version are Saint Stephen, the first Hungarian king and the first Hungarian saint, his son Emeric the Chaste and his descendant, the chivalrous Saint Ladislas. Respect for sacred kings is rooted in the Christian teaching on virtue. According to this, Saint

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Fig. 1. Mihály Zichy: Hungarian Nation, 1894. On the left: Ferenc Deák guarding the Holy Crown, in the background battle scenes from Hungarian history and the gallows of Arad. Right, below: Árpád elevated on a shield; above: coronation ceremony of Francis Joseph.

Stephen is the personification of the virtues of wisdom and generosity, Emeric of chastity and Ladislav of chivalry.

The main altar of Mateóc, built in the mid-1400s, is a case in point, showing Saints Stephen and Emeric in the central altarpiece (Fig. 2). The left-hand wing depicts two scenes from Saint Stephen's life which illustrate his virtue. In the upper one, the king forgives the man who wanted to murder him, thus exemplifying mercy; the lower one shows him facing death

with resignation. On the pediment above Saint Stephen is King Solomon's half-length portrait, and above Emeric, David's: allusions to the Hungarian kings' analogical counterparts in the Old Testament.

The late medieval figure of a passive and merciful Saint Stephen undergoes considerable changes in the 16th century to re-emerge as that of a fighting defender of Christianity.

He is reinterpreted as a man of martial prowess who not only shatters the idols of the heresy of Protestantism, but is also the shield of Christianity against the pagan Ottomans. An essential element of Saint Stephen's "Baroque" iconography is the *Regnum Marianum* (Fig. 3). According to a passage of the

Hartvik legend, Saint Stephen put his country under Mary's patronage; thus it is Mary's country and Mary is the patron of the Hungarians. The most frequent iconographical scene in Baroque representations of Saint Stephen is that of his dedicating the country to Mary. It was directed not only against the Ottomans but also against those Protestants who did not show any special respect for the Virgin. The Counter-Reformation measures taken by the court in Vienna are also sometimes

associated with this type of iconography.

There is no doubt that the Habsburg cult of Mary, widely propagated in the 17th and 18th centuries, is connected with this representation of Saint Stephen. In the spirit of this cult, Leopold I solemnly dedicated the country in 1693—clearly alluding to his forerunner and predecessor Saint Stephen's similar gesture—to the Queen of Heaven, Our Lady of Hungary (*Magna Hungariae Domina*). The Habsburg cult of Mary and the reconversion of part of the Hungarian gentry to Catholicism resulted in several places of pilgrimage, the most famous being Maria-Zell in Lower Austria, visited by pilgrims from Hungary as well.

Under Maria Theresa, the cult of Saint Stephen was enriched by the revived veneration of his Holy Dexter. The Empress succeeded in obtaining the valuable relic from Ragusa (Dubrovnik) and had it ceremonially taken to the royal palace in Buda. The veneration of this Holy Dexter has been part of the Saint Stephen cult since 1771. Naturally, the Protestants did not join in, rejecting all reliquary cults and the veneration of saints. Later, in the 19th and 20th centuries, much tension was again caused by the forcing of Protestants to take part in the Saint Stephen ceremonies,



Fig. 2. Central altarpiece from Mateóc representing Saint Stephen and Saint Emeric.
An example of veneration of the medieval royal saints.

which had become a national celebration by then.

From what has been said, it would seem as though the figure of Saint Stephen was part and parcel of the imperial Habsburg ideology and can thus be seen as a symbol of the imperial unity which the Habsburg court desired. In actual fact, however, Saint Stephen was used to express not only the Habsburg imperial ideology but also Hungarian constitutional independence, which was periodically affirmed during the life of the Empire. Apart from the Habsburg veneration of Saint



Fig. 3. The most widespread representation of Saint Stephen in the Baroque period: the king offering the country to the Virgin Mary.

Stephen there was an independent Hungarian Catholic Saint Stephen cult in the 17th century, which sometimes emphasized different aspects of the saint from those stressed by the Habsburgs. The medieval Hungarian cult of sacred kings was extended to the more general veneration of Hungarian saints in the Baroque era. This is shown in its ultimate richness in *Ungaricae Sanctitatis Indicia*, published by the Jesuit Gábor Hevenesi (first published in 1693, in Nagyszombat-Trnava-Tyrnau). The assembly of holy Hungarians, or the "Hungarian Heaven" reflected Hevenesi's

concept of the nation. This kind of national consciousness has been called by native historians *hungaricus* consciousness to distinguish it from 19th century Hungarian national consciousness, which was founded on language. Hevenesi's *hungaricus* concept included not only the saints who were members of the Árpád dynasty, but all those who had any conceivable connection with the Hungarian people or the mother country. In this way Hevenesi's book "hungarizes" even those who had some connection with the Huns and Avars. This motif, as part of the theory of a Hun-Hungarian continuity, had been part of the gentry's cultural tradition since the Middle Ages. The saints of

Pannonia were also counted as Hungarians, along with even the remotest relatives of Hungarian royalty. Hevenesi's "Hungarian Heaven" is a symbolic expression of a national consciousness which was moulded by the religious concepts of the 17th century and based on Catholic universalism. Although certain members of the assembly of Hungarian saints lived in different historical eras, their holiness implied a specific, extra-temporal, imaginary presence. This motif remained an important element of the Saint Stephen cult and of the forms of national consciousness



Fig. 4. Pierre Joseph Verhaghen: Saint Stephen Receives the Papal Envoys Bringing the Crown, 1770. A historical symbol of the Hungarian kingdom.

which were manifest within the context of Catholic piety. The first sign of a secularization of Saint Stephen's image can be found in representations which can be brought into direct connection with the Doctrine of the Holy Crown as argued by István Verbőczy. According to him, power originally rested with the assembly of the people, the *communitas*, and was later conferred upon the Holy Crown by the last such public assembly. Academic paintings of the "histoire" kind, like that by P.J. Verhaghen showing Saint Stephen receiving the papal delegates bringing him the crown, testify to the gaining ground of a secular approach to history. Although an

example of courtly art, it is the fruit of a modern historicism differing considerably from the myth-based Baroque approach. This new historicism represents the historical event as an occurrence in a particular place at a time in the past, rather than as one in a series of mythical events outside real time. Executed in 1770, the painting argues that the Habsburg ruler is legitimized as king of Hungary by Saint Stephen's crown. (Fig. 4).

During the Enlightenment this "legalistic" approach was soon embraced by Hungarian clericals opposed to the court, and sought to defend the integrity of Hungarian constitutional and canon law.

Towards the end of the century, in reaction to Joseph II's imperialist policy, the Doctrine of the Holy Crown grew in importance among the Hungarian nobility. According to this, the power of the crown depends on the estates who are supposed jointly to elect a king. Joseph II's refusal to have himself crowned with Saint Stephen's crown was a clear indication of his policy.

The further secularization of the doctrine and the increasing influence of estates-minded attitudes is reflected by Sámuel Decsy's *The History of the Hungarian Crown and Regalia*. This represents the views of Enlightenment and was published in Vienna in 1792. Apart from describing the crown, Decsy also tells its history. Although he is writing about the Holy Crown, the tone and the historical arguments used are overtly directed against Saint Stephen and the clergy.

The lesser nobility and the changing interpretation of royal power

In his book, Decsy devotes a long chapter to the prehistory of the Hungarians, emphasizing their Eastern origin. This prehistory, which is based largely on Romantic literary notions, e.g., on the theory of the Hungarians being descendants of the Huns, was first put forward around 1280 by Simon Kézai in his chronicle. Kézai put great emphasis on Hun-Hungarian identity, which was then used as a justification for the conquest of the country by Árpád. According to this theory, Árpád invaded the country which had once been conquered by his legendary forebear, Attila; thus Árpád's deed came to be interpreted as the recovering of the lawful heritage of his people. From the 18th century on, there evolved, inspired by this work

and European Attila legends, an image of Attila which differed greatly from the Western one and which had a legitimizing function for different eras. Matthias Corvinus, who was not of the blood royal, was often referred to as "Attila Secundus" by his court historians, to mention just one example.

The theory of Hun-Hungarian identity was readily embraced by noblemen and was given artistic expression in ancestor galleries which started to be fashionable from the middle of the 17th century. Some of these families had commissioned paintings of the Hungarian tribal chieftains before Saint Stephen, or of Attila, as proof of the family's ancestry and independence of royal patronage. The copper engraving of a family tree made by Tobias Sadler (commissioned by Pál Esterházy) represents the Esterházy family as descendants of Adam himself, tracing the first Esterházy back to the chieftain Örs, thence to Attila, to Hunor and to Noah. This genealogical mythology popular among noblemen was formulated in the publication *Mausoleum Regni Apostolici Regum et Primorum militantis Ungariae Ducum*, printed in 1664 in Nürnberg and illustrated by engravings. Discussing the history of Hungarian kings, the book also presents their pagan forefathers. Its popularity is evident from the fact that several reproductions as paintings and murals have been preserved (Fig. 5).

This tradition of an Eastern origin among the nobility was given new momentum in the last third of the 18th century. The aforementioned work by Sámuel Decsy is another example of a mixing of the older noble tradition and the historicism of the Enlightenment. The reason why his work is important for us is that it is the first source where we can identify motifs of the anti-Saint Stephen and anti-Catholic attitudes which were to develop fully in the 19th and 20th centuries.

According to Decsy's description, Saint Stephen was not a saint since he was fallible and had his relative Kupa (Koppány) murdered and Gyula imprisoned. The reason that he wanted a crown, says Decsy, was not the country's need for a king but his very human vanity; he was evidently delighted with the royal title bestowed upon him by Pope Sylvester. Yet one of the reasons why he did not really need the crown he received from Sylvester was that he already had one, namely Árpád's crown, the one with which Attila had been crowned in 401. Until King Sámuel, Hungarian kings had always been crowned with this ancient crown dating back to Attila and Árpád. However, Henry III had the crown taken to Rome and it was never returned.

This radical negation of the Hungarian political tradition based on Saint Stephen is explained by the anti-Habsburg feeling among the Protestant minor nobility. The set of beliefs held by the lesser nobles did not differentiate between the Habsburg mythology conceived for the whole empire and the *hungarus* doctrine of the Hungarian higher nobility and clergy. It was the lesser nobility which emphatically embraced the ideology of conservative noble romanticism in the early 19th century and whose vocabulary was laced with expressions evoking "the ancestral glory" and pervaded by xenopho-



ÁRPÁD I. CAPITANEVS HVNGAR

Fig. 5. Picture of Árpád the leader, from the Mausoleum Regni Apostolici Regum et Primorum..., 1664.

It points out that the legitimacy of the state dates from the period of occupation preceding the adoption of Christianity.

bia. We can find no major artistic expressions of these ideas at the beginning of the 19th century. The politically inspired cult of prehistoric forefathers can be reconstructed mainly from linguistic and literary sources. One reason for this is the general narrowness of the Protestant tradition of artistic representation and its iconoclastic

Fig. 6.
János Mihály Hesz:
The Baptism of Vajk,
1825.

*Sketch for the
main altarpiece of
the Cathedral of
Esztergom.
The emphasis is on
the Christian origin of
royal power.*



aspects. Although in theory this taboo related only to religious themes, Protestants used pictures much less than Catholics and generally resisted pictorial representation until profane historical genres gained ground.

The ancestral galleries continued to be built well into the 19th century and often included the well-known episode from the

legend of how Árpád acquired the country. The story is that Árpád bought the land from the reigning Prince Svatopluk and paid for it with a white horse, a jugful of Danube water and a handful of grass. A representation of this scene was most likely to supplement the pictures of ancestors in Protestant manors and chateaux east of the river Tisza.

In reaction to the religious representations of Saint Stephen cherished by the conservative nobility, representations of the baptism of Vajk—when Vajk acquired the name of Stephen—became more common after 1820. The first monumental historical picture elaborating the theme was made for the high altar of Esztergom cathedral in 1825 (Fig. 6) commissioned by Prince Primate Sándor Rudnay. He was appointed to the see of Esztergom, which had then been vacant for nine years, in 1809. Joseph's court in Vienna had reduced the power of the Church in many ways. Rudnay, who was of minor noble origin, transferred his seat to Esztergom, the earlier seat of the archdiocese, and started a number of large-scale construction projects.

In 1822 he summoned what was called a national council, intended to discover the causes of "faltering devotion" and "loose morality". The decisions of the council were vetoed by Metternich and so could not be announced publicly. It was then that the bishop commissioned János Mihály Hesz, an academic painter, to commit to canvas the picture on the high altar of the basilica, which was then being built: a representation of Vajk being baptised as Stephen.



Fig. 7. Gyula Benczúr: *The Baptism of Vajk*, 1875.

The obviously didactic painting expresses a recatholicizing intention directed against the enlightened members of the Viennese court, as well as against the theories of ancient Hungarians cherished by the nobility. The theme of Vajk's christening was meant to counter the "people of the East" ideology, which was gaining ground in the early 1800's. The theme was taken up several times during the 19th century, but the most



Fig. 8. László Hegedűs: Memorial Poster for the Nine-Hundredth Anniversary of Christianity in Hungary, 1900.

spectacular representation of Vajk's Eastern nature is Gyula Benczúr's 1875 painting (Fig. 7).

A good portion of 19th century Saint Stephen representations are religious works of art. The first monumental profane representations of the theme appeared as late as the end of the 19th century, when Saint Stephen's statue was erected in a public place together with great mural projects designed to display his deeds. One reason for this was the failure of the 1848/9 Revolution. After the defeat, the court did not permit the celebration of Saint Stephen's day as a national holiday, and only religious celebrations

were approved. This situation changed in 1860; from then on, town and county authorities were allowed to take part in the Saint Stephen's Day processions, just as they had done before 1849 (Fig. 8).

In 1875–1905, when the Liberal Party was in power, official political rhetoric was centred on Saint Stephen's ideal of the state, that of a multi-national empire. In contrast, the Independence Party proclaimed the supremacy of ethnic Hungarians. By the time this party came to power in 1905, the cult of Saint Stephen was in decline. After the Treaty of Trianon (1920), however, it again became the dominant ideology. In the interwar period Hungary



Fig. 9. Mihály Kovács: *Elevation of Árpád on a Shield*, 1854.
A symbol of national consensus.

was a kingdom without a king, and the political power of that time owed its legitimacy to the Holy Crown itself. This idea was expressed in several memorials erected to the memory of the dead of the Great War.

After the Second World War, and particularly following the political turning point of 1949, the Government enunciated a socialist programme and ideology. In this political scene the cult of Saint Stephen was neglected, or rather replaced by other cults such as Constitution Day, and the Day of New Bread. Recently, and especially since the return of the Holy Crown from the United States, Saint Stephen's personality has gradually come back into the limelight. The Holy Crown has become a symbol of the integrity and cultural unity of all Hungarians irrespective of their citizenship.

If we go back to the events at the turn of century, we can see the cult of Árpád

growing at the time when the Independence Party was increasing in power. This cult dates back to the Age of Reform in the first half of the 19th century. At the time the favourite themes of representation were the chieftains sealing their contract with blood and raising Árpád on a shield (Fig. 9).

Both are symbolical renderings of the favourite political slogan of the era—the "union of interests"—which also expressed a political programme. Mihály Kovács's painting, which was widely reproduced, shows not only the tribal chieftains' unanimous choice of a leader, but also represents the people as participants in the act of choice. Representations of the blood contract are another kind of symbolic expression of the unity of the Hungarian race. Towards the end of the century, the same theme was also used to express the continued reference of the



Fig. 10. Bertalan Székely: *The Blood Contract*, 1902. Ceremonial Hall of the Town Hall of Kecskemét. A symbol of the unity of the Hungarian nation.

ancient origin and original nature of the people. Bertalan Székely, the artist who painted the picture for the Kecskemét town hall—another representation of the blood contract—selected his models with great care amongst peasants in the area, choosing who he thought had the most characteristically Hungarian faces (Fig. 10).

The great boom in the Árpád theme came in the last decade of the century, most probably influenced by the millennial atmosphere. The memorial plaque *Glorification of Árpád the Leader, Founder of Our Homeland* (Fig. 11) illustrates the philosophy of history behind one body of opinion which was inspired by the approaching millennium. The plaque shows, gathered around Árpád's statue, historical figures who were selected by the Independence Party to express their view of history. Significantly, the pantheon of their heroes did not include Saint Stephen, but we see instead the princes they considered nation-

ally important—Gábor Bethlen, Bocskai, Rákóczi—together with the political and literary notables of the Age of Reform.

This work is a clear example of the Protestant concept of history. Looking back on the events of the 1880s, the Calvinist bishop István Révész describes the protagonists of this history as follows:

"Their common destiny is with all those defendants of our national and political autonomy against the international forces of the Emperor and Pope, and against the intention to assimilate us, who were impelled and inspired by their Protestant upbringing and family background to serve the nation we call Hungarian: Bocskai, Gábor Bethlen, the Rákóczys."

By the end of the century, the cult of Árpád had led to a demand for memorials. One of them, the Millennial Monument, became the scene of political rituals later on. The fact that it was shaped by an order-based historical concept is evident not



Fig. 11. O. Lenz, after Ö. Kacziány:
Glorification of Árpád the Leader, Founder of Our Homeland, 1896.

The figures represent:
 Árpád, István Báthory, Lajos Batthyány, Gábor Bethlen,
 István Bocskai, Ferenc Deák, Lajos Kossuth
 Kelemen Mikes, Sándor Petőfi, Ferenc II Rákóczi,
 István Széchenyi, László Teleki, Imre Thököly, Ilona Zrínyi.

only from the central position assigned to Árpád but also from the spatial separation of the crown and the kings. Another turn-of-the-century relic connected with Árpád is the *Panorama of the Conquest* (1894), the first of its genre in Hungary. The painter, Árpád Feszty—the novelist Mór Jókai's son-in-law—incorporated all eastern elements used by the writer in his novels in connection with the ancient Hungarians: the sacrifice of the white horse and the abduction of young women, the procession of tribal princesses and the bright chieftains, as well as Árpád himself. To come back to the special parallel between Árpád the conqueror of the land and Francis Joseph—the aim of this strange political manoeuvre is not difficult to see. By assuming the persona of a second Árpád, Francis Joseph made a dramatic departure from traditional Habsburg courtly ideology, giving a hint as to his readiness for a compromise. However, the two themes, or systems of symbols, continued to polarize even after the Monarchy came to an end. After the 1920s, Saint Stephen's pagan counterpart is no longer his princely ancestor, Árpád, but his contemporary enemy, Koppány, who was quartered on Stephen's orders. The opposing symbolic content of these two figures is given clear expression by the patriotic—or rather demagogic—lines written by Dezső Szabó in 1922:

"The great historical symbol of Hungarians as a race is not the right hand of the German woman's husband, Saint Stephen; their tragic, everbleeding symbol is Koppány, who was quartered". This was a reference to the division of the country into four parts. As a reaction against the growing German influence, the myths of oriental origin became dominant. The associated movements used the ancient Hungarian totem animal, the Turul bird, as their main symbol. According to the legends, it would fly in front of the Hungarian host, with

Attila's sword in its claws. The Turul as a symbol is also the pagan counterpart to the main formal symbol, the Holy Crown. After the Second World War, the myth of oriental origin and the associated symbols were cultivated above all by the Hungarian exiles in America.

The representations of the two historical figures—Árpád and Saint Stephen—described above took shape in the course of a general process of symbolization. The two figures are symbolizations of two different sets of ideas which came to be opposed in the course of their history. The figure of Saint Stephen represents the following notions as listed below, not in any order of importance:

Catholicism, universalism—because Stephen was the founder of a Christian kingdom of West-European type; *the West*—because the state and culture which evolved as a result of his efforts connected the Hungarian nation to the Western culture of Europe; *royalty*—because he broke the ancient Hungarian tribal traditions and established a more advanced, feudal system; *multinationalism*—because he stressed in his will that "a nation consisting of a single language and single culture is weak"; *imperialism*—indicating both the multi-national state and its integration into the Habsburg empire; *sainthood*—because of the specific cult attached to his figure; *law-giving*—because he issued the first laws in Hungary.

Árpád bears the following characteristic associations: *pagan princehood*—because he came to power owing to the will of the nation rather than through the "creation" of the clergy; *legitimacy due to his arms*—because his rule was legitimized by the occupation of the country; *paganism*—because he maintained the ancient faith of the Hungarians; *the East*—because he represented the origin and continuity of Hungarian cultural traditions rooted in the an-

cient homeland; *homogeneity of the nation*—because the notions attached to him do not comprehend national minorities; *national independence*—because his personality recalls the Hungarians' self-reliance, and perseverance and their struggles to defend their own.

It must be stressed that I am using the words "Catholic" and "Protestant" not in their narrow religious meaning, but rather to refer to two cultural patterns which approach the creation and use of symbols in radically different ways. It may not be far-fetched to hypothesize that, due to the Calvinist hostility to religious representation, the general human need for symbols found satisfaction in politics. Part of these human needs were met in the Catholic world by the religious veneration of images. The difference between the two is still palpable in the 19th century in terms of the way both noblemen and peasants used pictures. In Calvinist areas, the taboo against religious themes resulted in the swift multiplication of Hungarian historical representations.

From what has been said it would seem that the figure of Saint Stephen is more a symbol of nationalism from above, originating from the empire or the state, while Árpád is an expression of what we call *risorgimento* nationalism.

This dualistic character of national consciousness is by no means peculiar to the Hungarians. A similar polarization can be detected in the Czech national consciousness, for instance in terms of differences between "Bohemian" Czechs, who tried to find a compromise with the imperial ideology, and the Hussites. In Polish history we come across the dualism of Piast and Jagiello nationalism. German national consciousness used to polarize around the extremes of smaller German and greater German ideology. Polarization of ideas was always followed by polarization of symbols with the Czech, Polish and German heroes centring around two poles like their Hungarian counterparts.

Functionally speaking, this polarity of national consciousness is a tool of adjustment to historical realities. As has been shown by our examples, in the course of historical changes this polarity enables ideas to be applied as appropriate to the actual situation; it facilitated the proclamation of the idea of "independence" or, on the other hand, "reconciliation", and it balanced alternately the influences coming from the East or the West. Although internal social conflicts are inherent in this dual nature of national consciousness, it has also been a guarantee of national survival. ■

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Miklós Györffy

The Way of All Texts

Miklós Mészöly: *Családáradás* (Family Tide). Kalligram, Pozsony, 1995, 152 pp. • Sándor Tar: *A mi utcánk* (Our Street). AB Beszélő, Budapest, 1995 • Péter Esterházy: *Egy nő* (This Woman). Magvető, Budapest 1995, 173 pp. • László Garaczi: *Mintha élne* (As If You Were Alive). Jelenkor, Pécs, 1995.

Miklós Mészöly, twenty to thirty years ago, not young even then, was a leading figure in the revival of Hungarian fiction; he has now become a modern classic. Now in his seventies he has, for quite some time, been building up a personal East Central European mythology out of details, real and fictional, of the history of his family and of his birthplace on the Danube in Tolna County in the old Roman province of Pannonia. "It is simpler and clearer," he writes of the anonymous chronicler of his latest work, *Family Tide*, "not to want to offer anything—and particularly not the alluring traps of imputations—only to make room humbly for the imagination and magic of facts."

He is weaving a mythology, pieced together out of accreting details, into an "unending" picture of a shoreless tide.

Here again he created his work out of the fragments of the tide, the one hundred years of solitude of a Tolna family. To this Márquez simile a Proust analogy may be added. Starting out from a day in the

1930s, reaching back to the 1848-49 Hungarian Revolution, reaching forward with a few references to the Second World War, he conjures up the history of the venerable, learned gentry family, the Árvai Jurkó, out of intertwining, legendary and magic memories. He approaches this history from the side of those who were not members of the clan, this mythic community, by blood. The family lived out their lives in two parallel, rival branches in the ancestral house in Bordács and in the Calvinist manse at Bogárd. The fictitious Bordács is obviously the town of Szekszárd, a place that recurs again and again in Mészöly's family mythology, while Bogárd is perhaps Sárbogárd, also in Tolna County. On that day in the 1930s, the actual backbone of the chapters, the master of the Bordács ancestral house is the "Father", a lawyer who is also the president of the county field sports society; the mistress of the Bogárd manse is Hermina, the portly matron, widow of the Calvinist minister, Dániel Csanaki, who is in her eighties. The "Father" only comes to the fore in the last of the six chapters, and then only owing to his death by arsenic poisoning; Hermina features in a memorable portrait in the preceding chapter, on the occasion of a diplomatic visit by Matinka of Bordács.

Miklós Györffy

is our regular reviewer of new fiction.

A collection of his reviews for HQ have just been published in Hungarian.

The ninety-odd years old Matinka is one of the "inherited" or "adopted" family members with a mysterious past. "Father" inherited her from his father, who at one time "moved much so that the tomboy and spicy Moravian girl was admitted to the Vienna conservatoire, among the gentlefolk of the balls of the nobility." Magdolna Borgis, who "had been dancing, singing and playing the piano from the twin cities of Pest and Buda to Barcelona", was over seventy by the time she accepted her former patron's invitation and moved into the balconied upper-floor room in the Bordács ancestral home.

Another member of the clan in this house is Iddi, the daughter of Magdolna Logomár, who as a woman was among the first in Hungary to graduate in mathematics, physics and philosophy; when she made discoveries similar to those of Madame Curie's, she took her own life. "Father" adopted her daughter, who was brought up as a sister of the Árvai Jurkó children; now she would like to become pregnant by David, "Father's" married son—an event which finally comes to pass. Also living in the ancestral home is the eccentric Uncle Emil, once a master mariner, who preoccupies himself with the mechanics of fumes and winds and work on the model of a ship of his that foundered.

The key figure, however, is Júlia, with whom *Family Tide* opens and closes. Júlia had been a shorthand-typist in "Father's" law office and affianced to the Calvinist clergyman who finally married Biborka Csanak of the Árvai Jurkó branch. Somehow or other she too came to dwell in the ancestral home. (In order to lend a mythical dimension to the family legend, Mészöly leaves many events in obscurity, apparently assigning them no importance "in the imagination and magic of facts", as if he were speaking to people who have been initiated into these details.) Júlia, a

post-menopausal old maid, enters her thoughts and observations on the family in her diary. She is an odd sort of blue stocking full of secret injuries, offenses and griefs, who nevertheless bears her lot with dignity, retaining a good grasp of things. It is she who finally poisons "Father" in an act of revenge, perhaps of disappointment in love. Júlia, Iddi, Matinka and Hermina are Mészöly's latest splendid variations on memorable matrons and spinsters and the swelling and coiling sentences of *Family Tide*, its lurking, torturous irony and masterful legendary gloom present a writer at the full strength of his powers. The unfinished last sentence and the word "unending" below it indicate that, even if one cannot reckon with a traditional family novel, Mészöly is sure to continue to turn out variations of his imaginary and magic fragments of memory.

Sándor Tar, now in his fifties; made a name with his documentary stories. He lives in the country among those who earn their livelihood through manual labour, portraying their lives in his writing. He thus carries on—practically single-handed—an important Hungarian literary tradition of popular realism, which had its heyday between the two wars, as cultivated by Zsigmond Móricz. "Sándor Tar has remained in a place from which his fellow-writers have slowly withdrawn. He still knows the reason for a sudden silence in a bar," observes Ádám Bodor, another writer who has also amply drawn on this tradition. Tar's latest novel, *The Street Where We Live*, offers some interesting novelties when compared to his earlier work. For the first time he tries his hand at organizing his material into a longer comprehensive unit. Whether the result is a cycle of stories or a novel is an open question, Tar himself offering no definition. The thirty-one short stories are linked by

"the street where we live" and the same characters.

The street itself is located in the present, in a village somewhere in the eastern marches of Hungary. Unemployed families live there, families shipwrecked in the change of the political system. Yet, politics hardly ever figure on the horizon of those who live in the street, and their lives did not greatly differ even when they still had a job. These people, together with their forebears and descendants—if there will be any survivors—have always been and shall always be at the bottom of the social heap. They live in the country, but they no longer till the soil. Previously they had commuted to local towns for work in factories where they had become redundant. When still working, they had just about started to build some kind of home using their meagre income and to set up a family; now, however, everything has remained unfinished and has begun to crumble. Marriages and families have gone bankrupt and are breaking up. All day long people sit around at home or are out drinking. Beer, wine or brandy, it makes no difference as long as it is alcoholic. Some scrape together some money by bootlegging, this being the only line of business in which there is a slight boom. Drink destroys bodies and morals. Lonely men and disillusioned, humiliated women couple like beasts. Everything is enveloped and crippled by the fume of drink, heat, dust, inaction, illness, and agony.

Tar draws an apocalyptic picture of "the street where we live". His book recalls some other oppressive visions of the East European doomsday: László Krasznahorkai's *Satan Tango* or Ádám Bodor's *Sinistra District*, which might have influenced *Our Street* in that they encouraged Tar to use a similar construction. There, too, the fictional world is provided by a fenced off and enclosed spatial unit and

there, too, the subject of human decline and dissolution is varied in loosely connected chapters. Tar's volume is reminiscent of *Sinistra District* also in that it here and there presents the inferno of "our street" in grotesque colours. This has a weird effect since Tar the documentarist consistently prevails. Nothing ever is said in the variations on the subject, in the chapters that accentuate and concentrate on some of the characters, which does not sound realistic and is not verified by the writer's direct and thorough familiarity with the subject and the objectivity of his description. In one chapter, "Bird's Eye View", he fully distances his subject and scrutinizes it as a sociologist. His goal of stylization is also evident in the fact that, apart from the three last chapters, all the stories are of the same length, almost to the number of lines (by and large 160 lines each, the space offered by a journal that first published them). Even if the reader is not conscious of the line-count, it lends a monotonous rhythm to the text, a rhythm obviously related to the vital rhythm of those who live in the street.

However, it is impossible not to notice Tar's dark and morbid humour, previously not really present in his earlier stories. It is a dry and lean humour, the kind that can grow "in the street where we live". Part of the difficulty in discussing it lies in the fact that it seems to be an organic part of the dry manner of rendition, and yet it still uses punchlines, indeed, even distorts and exaggerates. It has no satirical purpose, but neither is it tolerant and forgiving. Alongside the almost imperceptible irony of the tone, there are many coarsely comic episodes, but Tar does not play these up either. Uncle Béres gets as far as the acacia tree beside the inn when he realizes that he has forgotten his crippled wife in the dunny. Old Uncle Kocsis points out to his granddaughter Black Tarcsai, the burly,

black foreman, who has come with a mechanical digger to help lay a water pipe, and is just peeing at the bottom of the garden. And Eszti obediently lays her hooks on him. Terka Papp, who is "Jancsi Hesz's mother-in-law every minute of the day", buys binoculars from a Russian at the flea-market and uses them to spy on the neighbours from the attic window. Now she knows even more about them than she had so far. When they discover what the old woman has been up to, they scare her by telling her that her eyes have started to protrude from their sockets and become glassy. These anecdotal, humorous, even seemingly jovial details by no means counterbalance the pictures of self-destruction, emptiness and doom, they fit into them naturally. There is no difference between them, they are different elevations of the same wretched vegetating existence. Yet, for all its apt and crushing details, *The Street Where We Live* does not come up to the standard set by Krasznahorkai or Bodor, who have created a world all of their own. It is a world that has remained somewhat stuck in the mud, but it is also true that it is *this* world—which no longer is the peasant's land, rather the dusty, potholed street of villagers who have become homeless in their own country—about which nobody knows more in Hungary today than Tar does.

Péter Esterházy's latest book, if we take the title as a guide, is about *A Woman*. In fact, it is not about *one* woman, but many women, and it is even possible that it is about a man, a man who speaks about these women, or rather about Woman. There are ninety-seven short units, and each begins with "There is a woman". According to the sentence that follows, this woman either "loves" or "hates" the "speaker", who appears throughout in the first person singular. I cannot use "narra-

tor" here, since narration has a restricted role in these texts. Whether, according to the man who is speaking, the woman in question "loves" or "loathes" him, forms part of the fictitious play of the short textual unit. Neither "love" nor "loathing" means what it actually does mean, or rather, the sense of such statements becomes modified in many ways in their stride and is always to be understood as part of an amorous game. The game frequently begins in some of the statements which open the "story": "She loves me, I love her, she loathes me, I hate her"; "Well... she loves me"; "She loves, she doesn't love"; "There's this womanloath. Loathing"; L...; H...; "Etcetera".

The various sections are all about a woman, or rather her relationship with the speaking male. It is sometimes set forth in a few lines ("There's this woman. She feels about me as I do about her, she hates, she loves. When she loathes me, I love her, when she loves me, I hate her. There is no other case.") and sometimes in the form of a miniature story of two to three pages. Sometimes it is about a woman who appears to have featured earlier. Yet the man's speech outlines the features of different women. As is always the case with Esterházy, here too, it is this characteristic phrasing which is the main point. Whether he describes the external and internal qualities of the woman, whether he quotes her words, whether he goes into their physical or emotional relationship, or whether he relates an "episode" of the "story" of their "love", the dominant material is always the familiar, playful and ironical phrasing; in that it is the male who is speaking, the role-playing writer himself, who is the protagonist. "There's this woman. I love her. And I could tell you point by point why. I could list those characteristics of her, those good and bad and unclassifiable characteristics, that led to

this loving: she speaks Greek, she's got freckles, and a scar on her forehead, a pale exclamation point, she's radical, with a good feel for riches, her locks are luxuriant, her mouth sour, her heart weak, her thighs short (well, one is, anyway), when the weather's hot—I don't know how to say this—the skin is chapped under her sacroiliac, at the spot where the two gentle hills begin but the valley hasn't yet bent into it, at that spot her skin is cracked and slightly inflamed, too, she loves Italo Calvino and oatmeal, her skin is the colour of bronze, she's coarse and modest at the same time, in the self-same, daring gesture. I could count on one hand the number of times I've seen her, and so on and so forth. Yes, indeed, I love you. She doesn't know what to make of it."

The ironical verbal points, the amorous erotic postural exercises are, as usual, at every turn interwoven with topical political and cultural allusions. Esterházy's women are drawn from those who people our own world, and the paraphernalia they are so richly endowed with are familiar. At the same time, there is something eternal and constant in them as well, a kind of *ewig Weibliches*, which Esterházy tries to apprehend in sensuality and sexuality. The textual units of *This Woman* are all variations on female bodies and sexual partners; they are the erotic reveries of a man about various women, who, taken together, exemplify the innumerable forms sexual play-acting can take. A feminist might perhaps accuse Esterházy of seeing only the *Lustobjekt* in the woman, but his speaking self loves (or indeed hates) the prevailing woman in the female body, which is never that of a cliché and vamp—who is different from all the others and is just like she is.

The secret of *This Woman* lies in the details of the text. These details have the same sensual attraction and magic as the female body has. If one tries to speak

about *This Woman*, as a work, the most one could think of would be empty generalities, as if one wanted to say something about Woman. It is impossible to summarize the variations of the copious sensual experiences of a hundred women, or to reduce them to a common denominator. At the same time, however virtuososo a writer may be, his text cannot supplement the sensual experience. A text exists in a different dimension and has a different natural history than sexuality has. Esterházy's text—"acts", separately, are all highly enjoyable, but as a whole, they lack some arranging cyclic principle which would point beyond the mere repetition of variations. A desire for literary delight is not fully satisfied in reading *This Woman*.

The thirty-nine-year-old László Garaczi, a well-known figure in the post-modern generation, now comes forward with a first "novel", following his stories, poems and plays. As *If You Were Alive* is to even the most flexible concept of the novel as his previous work is to their supposed genre. The subtitle of his "As-if-novel" is "Confessions of a Lemur, 1". The lemur in all certainty is Garaczi himself, since the first person "confessor" compiles a text out of episodes in the life of a person called Laci Garaczi (Garacilaci, Garafilafi, etc.) who is recognizably identical with the writer; given the accepted sense of the number 1 tagged to the subtitle, the text will be followed by a continuation. This continuation will perhaps explain why the "first" part ends just where it does. So far there is no sign of any rounded-offness or completeness here, but then, how could there be, when such concepts are unknown to post-modernism?

The various details of the text have no connection whatever with each other, the sole link being the person of the "confessing lemur" and the flippant, discursive lan-

guage. At one point the author reports on the habits of the lemurs in Yellowstone Park, based on a press conference a team of ethologists gave in Minneapolis. "In the video recordings the lemurs pick up the lighters of the visitors, they gather firewood like the visitors do, sit around the fire and from time to time, mad with delight, start squealing. Having concluded the seance, they put out the glowing embers with their urine so as not to cause a forest fire. The conference gave rise to a heated press controversy on whether at their present stage of evolution, lemurs are fit to receive the message of the gospel. Father Roger, chaplain to the employees at Yellowstone Park, insists on America not being in the position to take upon itself the responsibility for the possible damnation of the lemurs, and he had a small but enthusiastic group of missionaries sent to the region inhabited by the small monkeys."

The lemurs behave as if they were men. Garaczi acts as if he were writing a novel. As if he were alive and were to make a confession about his life. But in the age of the post-modern that can only be a ridiculous, absurd semblance, because life and literature have really no place here any more. Or more exactly, somehow or other, they still seem to have, since Garaczi's written work contains a text in book form, many details of which recall various stages and events of the as-if-life of the protagonist, with special regard to childhood, a popular subject of this type of confession and life-story. Garaczi perceptibly finds great pleasure in piling up his memories of the 1960s, when he was a small scamp of nursery-school age. Even then it was clear that he was an uncommonly large rascal, an eternal mischief-maker and an ir-

reparable rebel, who does not let grown-ups grind him into their own world. Later on, all that is revealed of the as-if-life of the lemur Garaczi is that he was always resisting, always rebelling, was always something other than what he should have been, who never believed what they tried to make him believe. He was always escaping, drinking, loafing and indulging in drugs.

The confessions of the lemur seem to be about a thirty-nine-year old young man who has nothing to do with the world in which he lives. In fact, the situation is not as serious as that, as Garaczi the post-modern writer is simply playing with this stock of experiences. He used them to create a text which parodies the autobiographical confessional novel and thus his own life as well. Fragments of a paragraph, a sentence, sometimes merely of a word, follow one another in seemingly random order. Various textual units, even if in slang, are always carefully measured, providing so many feats of bravura of Garaczi's insolent, provocative parlance pour *epater* at all costs. Their linking is deliberately indolent, even destructive. Occasionally, some kind of narrative almost gets under way but then the writer suddenly realizes what happens and is quick to break up his text once again. With Esterházy, the sensual charm of the text somewhat compensates for the lost story; here the author's acrobatics bit by bit begin to irritate. It is as if he wished to provoke the reader by proving that, with his splendid gift of the gab, he can spirit away a story that was originally there. In so doing, however, he not only charms away the story, but also the human truth of his own lemur life. That is, presuming he still has one. ■

Memories of Annie Fischer (1914-1995)

I sit squeezed together with my fellow students on the organ gallery in the large auditorium of the Liszt Academy. I am, perhaps, the only one here who has never heard Annie Fischer.

I have had a "promising" start. After the child prodigy golden age I was now in a period of increasing my musical awareness and acquiring a grounding in technique and methods. My models, on the strength of their records, were Vilhelm Backhaus and Vladimir Horowitz. Speed, clarity, power, a large repertoire were the summits to attain. The poetic aspect of music, art, emotions? Yes. That was why I had taken up music at so young an age, convinced, like everyone else, that it was just like one's soul, something quite straightforward. If I have the adequate means, and am capable of producing sounds with due clarity, power and swiftness, according to the highest standards of what is called technique—the rest will take care of itself. With emotions in my soul, the moment my fingers are able to satisfy the demands of the raw material and are able to produce the sounds, there will be music. But the results desired failed to arrive, not only for me but also for other pianists I heard in those days. The technique was there, and the feelings must have been, yet I did not hear what I wanted to from myself and others.

So I was waiting with some curiosity for Annie Fischer; jealous opinions had told me about her undeniable talent, that her successes as a child prodigy had spoiled her—which was why she paid little attention to accuracy, clarity and various other things virtuosity demands.

Even before she came onto the platform the waiting itself appeared to be different from the moments preceding other recitals. The faces in the audience did not bear the expression of a strict Beckmesserian judge; nor did I notice worried and sympathizers, rooting for the success of the

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performance. It was rather the joyful expectation of a beautiful experience; the expectation of a child waiting for a story, or that of a young man waiting for his first love.

It was the expectation of an audience who knows and loves Annie Fischer's playing, knowing she will not let them go empty-handed. The audience is even seated on the platform: the concert hall is packed with people and atmosphere. At last the phenomenon appears. Her rusty-golden hair is worn in a bun. She almost glides across the platform in her long, red velvet dress. Her motion is not ethereal, however: there is something in it of the soft suppleness of a lion, its harmony concealing power. A blend of fairy and animal. She gently bows to the audience, humbling herself before art and not the crowd granting success. It is not to take an exam that she sits down to her instrument, but to practice magic. Her angular, oriental face carries a reminder of the enchanting serpent. Her eyes search for the invisible source. She is the serpent of the sacrifice, the priestess and the deity conjured up at one and the same time. She does not begin to play—she continues, and when she stops, the piece continues. The idea that music begins before the initial note and does not finish with the final one starts to make sense. She is not playing the instrument, she is at one with it. Again, my imagination turns to myth, although I have never heard of a mythical being part woman and part instrument. There are no defined movements; I almost see her giving birth to music as emotion creates movement, movement motion and motion music, in a chain composed of soul-body-instrument-sound. The magic carries me even further, to landscapes, moods, feelings, beings, events, to where the logic of consciousness is no longer valid; I am impelled to shed my everyday self, to fly away, to be absorbed in stories and dreams where the role of words and reason are replaced by the ineffable.

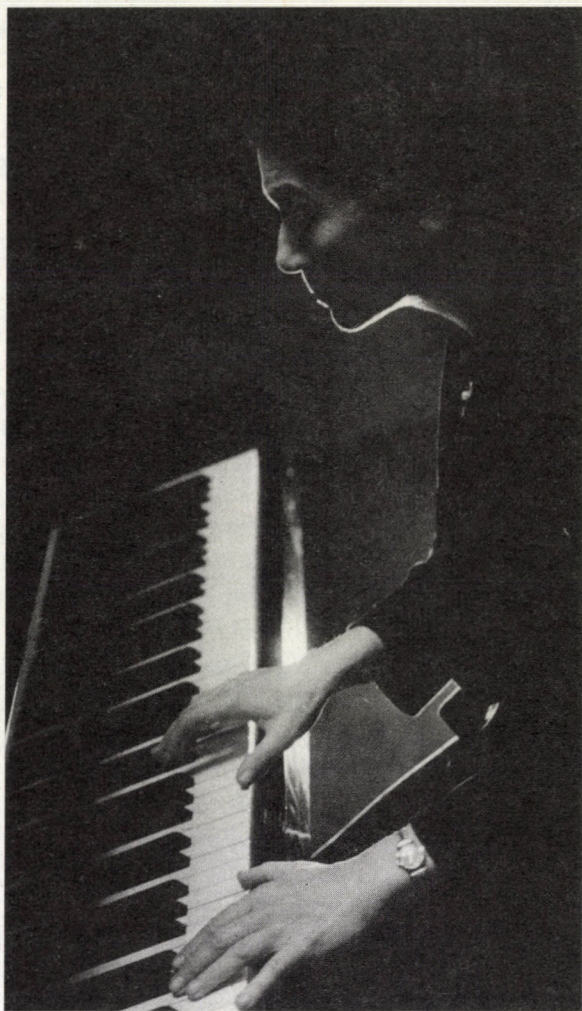
This magic is Mozart, Brahms and Schumann. They appear, their story is her story, and through her their dreams become our dreams. There are no musical problems, no phrasing, dynamics, equilibrium of sound. In dreams not even flying is a problem.

Annie takes us by the hand—and we remain entirely unaware of the dangers. Backhaus, Horowitz? Giants of the piano. Annie is art itself. She does not make us admire her performance, but rather, it is through her performance that we admire the poetry of art. I have never seen, heard, experienced anything like it before.

She took her bearings in the most abstract and most tangible regions of the art of music with such security, it was as if she herself had been made of the very same musical texture. She was extremely sensitive to what is true and real, unnatural and false. She was uncompromising, and would never lose sight of the essence of things. She was aware of the superiority of art to everyday life, which is why the logic of ordinariness stumbled if it wanted to follow her. How is it that with the high standards she represented, rejecting any false emotions, she

could just brush off wrong notes? Although she would acknowledge the technique and accuracy of certain virtuosi, she considered these skills secondary to the message conveyed, as if she had been entirely oblivious to the mistakes made in the heat of creation—her own or others' alike. "Clarity is easy to achieve if that's all you're concentrating on", she often said. I myself argue that way at master classes.

The foremost aspect of musical competitions is the count of false notes. Annie held that they are not worth more attention than a few buttons missing from a man's coat. Yet she was a ruthless critic of the True. She was never blinded by a "beautiful performance" which mimicked beauty. Often renowned performers, in an attempt to gain the appreciation of the audience and critics, and to demonstrate how deeply they understand music, play slow movements twice as slowly and soft passages three times as softly. But Annie strove for more, and was infinitely sensitive to subtleties. "That Beethoven was too beautiful," she often criticised performances in which Beethoven did not come through, in the simplest way, just as when great actors do not bat an eyelid although everyone knows they are going through excruciating emotional torment. Which brings Olivier's Hamlet to mind. Or Scofield's Salieri. When she was asked about contemporary artists, she gave a slightly wry smile. "Yes, the real giants are dead." Dohnányi among classics, Sauer with Liszt and Chopin. Hubermann was her violinist, Mengelberg and Klemperer her conductors. Toscanini was unique. "I remember attending a rehearsal of Verdi's Requiem with my husband. During the Dies Irae we suffered a fit of laughter. Don't be surprised, there was nothing to laugh about, but it had this incredible effect on both of us, manifesting itself in a grotesque, almost hysterical form."



It happens, I added. I was told by Japanese that it happens sometimes to people after an earthquake. It is the way overstrained nerves can find relief. "Hungarian television put on a series on Toscanini recently. It was at times wonderful, at times terrible, really wicked." Why is the greatest treasury of experiences that of the past? In terms of numbers there are many more musicians today, yet it was Annie's memories that constituted her real treasure-trove. Could this only be nostalgia? "True, there were masters who did not like the microphone, they were not inspired by the presence of technology. Like Klemperer. He has a great many recordings I just cannot listen to. True, there are others, too, which..."

Not long ago she went on tour in Italy, giving ten recitals in ten days in different cities. She, too, had the secret key of great personalities somewhere in her pocket. But beyond music (the spiritual source) I also have a more mundane-explanation. Annie never did anything she did not feel like doing. The ten concerts in Italy? She felt like doing them, just like the concert recordings of the thirty-two Beethoven piano sonatas. But whether it was a single one-minute piece, a single visit, a minute, or a movement: if she was not quite satisfied for any reason, even the Lord Almighty could not persuade her to do it. I remember how taken aback I was in the early fifties when Annie's husband, Aladár Tóth, then director of the Budapest Opera, asked me after a visit one evening to send a telegramme to the Gewandhaus in Leipzig. Annie was abroad at the time, and she wanted to turn down a series of concerts with the Gewandhaus Orchestra by telegramme. "You don't imagine Annie will learn a Rachmaninov concerto just for that?" Such a straightforward refusal (especially in those days) on the grounds of not feeling like playing a concerto, seemed quite strange to me. I did not know Annie well enough then. What seems strange today is that I found it strange then.

Anytime, anywhere, if I am asked who I consider the greatest pianist, without hesitation I reply, Annie Fischer. Why so unhesitatingly when it is obvious that art is not some sport where achievement is measured in inches and with stop-watches? The reason I find it so easy to call Annie "the greatest" is because she is beyond comparison. In the line in which she is the first there is no one else. There are many great virtuosi, excellent musicians and even artists, although the latter are substantially more rare. Annie was unique where standards, stop-watches and words cease to exist. Perhaps the only outwardly perceptible testimonies are the tears of emotion. Annie often made me cry, in fact, I sometimes had crying-fits when hearing her play. I loathe appearing emotionally vulnerable in front of strangers. After a concert of hers in London I went up to congratulate her and said, "look what you did to me with that Schubert impromptu" and I blubbed like a snivelling kid.

It is in evoking spirits that Annie surpassed others. She communicated with the greatest composers, revealing them in lifelike reality, allowing us to spend time with them. Could anyone do more for us than that? ■

Éva Forgács

Image in Motion

László Moholy-Nagy and the Film

Edison constructed the first phonograph in 1877, eighteen years before László Moholy-Nagy was born. Two years later, in 1879, the first incandescent electric bulb cast its light. In 1884 appeared the first synthetic material, and in 1885, ten years before Moholy-Nagy's birth, emulsion-coated photographic paper, which was followed in 1888 by the box camera. The same year also saw the invention of the electric motor; the first Diesel engine was operating by 1892, and the first Ford appeared a year later. The year of Moholy-Nagy's birth, exactly a hundred years ago, brought the introduction of the first radio transmitter, the first telegraphic apparatus and the first cinema camera. It was also the year of perhaps the most far-reaching discovery, that of X-rays—and of the highly important invention of sound recording. Also in 1895 Freud published his *Studies on Hysteria*, which he followed four years later with *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In 1896, Becquerel and the Curies discovered

radioactivity. Moholy-Nagy was ten years old when Einstein formulated his General Theory of Relativity.

It seemed as if as a consequence of the new forms of cognition and what resulted from them an illusion had been dispelled: the world was no longer that which man sees with his own eyes, but that which he learns about it while delving into the structure of its material. Leonardo da Vinci's conviction that vision means everything for the painter and the scientist, was relegated to history. Around 1900, the human eye was no longer considered the omnipotent means of acquiring cognition, but something strongly limited since all it could do was scan the surface; the X-ray, on the other hand, penetrated the surface and displayed things that were imperceptible to the eye.

At a time when human knowledge had undergone such a radical, revolutionary revaluation, painting a sunset in oil suddenly seemed appallingly anachronistic—not simply as lingering on the surface of things but as an attitude that refused to face the alarming, yet animating, structure of the world which still remained incalculable but whose discovery was already in the offing.

Few artists were as devoted to new materials and technologies as László Moholy-Nagy. Apart from his own natural inclination, he was enthralled by the new possi-

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bilities perhaps because he saw a profound historical metaphor in them. Control over machines and other man-made objects gave rise to a feeling that mankind was embarking on a straight road leading towards a good future, and one of the most important companions along this road would be the artist-cum-engineer.

By the time Moholy-Nagy arrived in Berlin in 1920, the explosive development in the technologies of recording had already brought results. Wherever he turned there was photography, film, radio, gramophone recordings and, above all, the telephone which had accelerated all forms of communication. He must have felt it inevitable, indeed ineluctable, for the spirit of radical revival, which had brought about new technologies, to manifest itself in all the works that could be produced employing these technologies.

It was a profound and not at all unwarranted conviction of Moholy-Nagy's, "anticipating the medium is the message" slogan, that technology itself is a precise means of communication about the age and about one of the basic experiences of the age; indeed, it is just as precise as all the things transmitted by technology. There were no technical possibilities, from the photogramme to special film effects, from photography to the sound film, from motor-powered statues to images transmitted through the telephone, that escaped Moholy-Nagy or which repeatedly led him to the recognition that it was a question of more than simply a new technology. His "telephone" pictures were simple, abstract geometrical compositions in which Moholy-Nagy gave the measurements and colour codes of the forms to a firm manufacturing enamelled products; following those precise instructions, they

produced the panels in an enamel technique on a metal base.¹

Moholy-Nagy's fanatical infatuation with technology was not simply a matter of playing with new toys; it sprang from the ecstatic faith that mankind had arrived at the threshold of a new age. It was a general vision among artists of the left that only a couple of screws in the machinery of society were needed to be readjusted for it to function perfectly, and for the day of liberty, equality and fraternity to dawn. There was no doubt, particularly in the minds of readily enthusing artists who combined enthusiasm with a strain of confidence (such as Moholy-Nagy) that technical and scientific progress could yield only positive results. During the Great War technology was appropriated by Evil, with its end, nothing seemed to block the way for technology in the service of Good. The mechanization of photography, the recording of the image, meant not only a guarantee of perfect verisimilitude and perfect technical realization—and of modernity—but it was also an expression of the irresistible process of perfection of man and the world. So it seemed at least in the eyes of many. The great utopia and euphoric mood of the twenties was built on a parallel: the perfect construction is the model, the anticipation, the promise of a perfect society in good working order. It heralds hopeful processes taking place in the depths, which can safely be elaborated, varied and freely shaped.

Incalculably rich new possibilities in the revival of visual expression were inherent in the moving of the image. But the moving image was the result and consequence of the motion of seeing: from the first decade of the 20th century painters were painting motion sequences and glori-

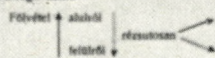
1 ■ Passuth, K.: *Moholy-Nagy*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1984, p. 32.

MOHOLY-NAGY: FILMVÁZ • A NAGYVÁROS dinamikája

Minden jog, különösen a fordítás és filmbe való ábraképes jog, lezárt.
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Vandár építész
(A világkörüli útjával — rajz — lassan természetföl-
tebbé válik át)
Hátsóképpel a város emeli

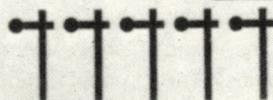


Téglafal
Körbe-moogó dűz

Ezt a mozgást tovább folytatja egy auto-
mobil, amelyik balra
→ rohan. A kép közepén folyton egy és
→ egyenest a hátsó látni; (t. i. a hátsó
mindig vissza kell a közepre fotográfálni).
Majd megint egy másik autómobil, amelyik az
elsővel egyidejűleg, csak ellentétes irányban,
→ szöglet
→ Az utca egyik hátsó részén ugyanabban az irány-
ban → rohan egy, hogy a kép köz-
pén levő hátsó látni. A hátsó rész
→ és visszajön →

Személyek hátsó részén egymáson átmozgónak ellentétes
irányban → rohannak és az autók is
mindig gyorsabban, hogy rövidesen kápráztak a szem
belső.

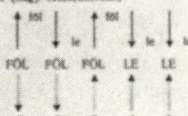
Tigris TIGRIS jár ketrecében
dühösen föl a alá
Magasan — föl — tisztán szeméremek



automatikusan

a-u-t-o-m-a-t-i-k-e-s-a-n

mozognak (nagy részletfölvétel)



Téglafal
Körbe-moogó dűz

Ezt a mozgást tovább folytatja egy auto-
mobil, amelyik balra
→ rohan. A kép közepén folyton egy és
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ban → rohan egy, hogy a kép köz-
pén levő hátsó látni. A hátsó rész
→ és visszajön →

SOTET SOTET
SOTETSEG

Vasút:
Ovástgút (járművekkel). Híd. Vándor. A melyben: szűz
hajók. Földet tebegek vasút (Eberfeld).
Vasútfölvétel magas földről: részletesen
Rakter hajtókában szűz
Szemei megfigyessenek (Nagy RÉSZLET-
fölvétel)
A vasút egy hídről: földet

Aldudról: egy a sínek közötti árokba a vonat haza,
ahogy elvágta
Kerek korog — elcsúszott vibrálásig



TEMPO
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Aróházban üvegfüvönök néger-
gyerekek
Földet
Eltörött perspektiva

Kilátás: CSÖDÖLET

A bejáratnál látható kutyák
Az üvegfüvönök mellett üveg telefonfülké telefonálók
Földetfölvétel az üvegápolón át
A telefonálók foszforszálló anyaggal bedörzsöl
(hogy ne keletkezzék szűz) ARCA körvonalai a föl-
vétel mellett lassan elfordul jobbra
Feje fölött spirálisan húzódik el egy messziről röplő
aeroplán



Röplőfölvétel: csokly magasságból: tér, ahová sok utca
terköllik



Járművek tömege: villamos, autó, teherkocsi, konflis,
bicikli, autóbussz, rakomány hajt gyors tempóban kifelé
egyszerre vízszintesről mind
a közpén deszafutnak



László Moholy-Nagy:

Excerpt from the film sketch, Dynamic of the Metropolis, 1921–22

fying dynamics and speed. Marinetti and his Futurists tried to summarize the flight of the swallow and the rotation of the car wheels in a static painting, Goncharova did the same with the way a bicycle wheel rolls and the feeling of speed in a moving train, and Duchamps with the phase shifts of the body descending stairs. Delaunay, Larionov, Goncharova and others attempted to “catch up with” light, to record its phases and changing colours. It is not simply a question of the cinema—the painters, approached movement with an

analytical curiosity. However, the avant-garde wanted the redemption of the world and not abstract research, and the manifestoes of Modernism spoke in the first place of the rapturous experience of speed as the analogy of a race towards the emancipating future. Aircraft, trains and cars became the new fetishes, and the alchemy of the time aimed at producing motion, striking dynamics out of the rock: bringing the image into motion, to represent motion by movement. The new form of vision, “vision in motion” as Moholy-

Nagy himself put it, meant a completely new approach, a thinking that basically differed from the tempo and vision of the man of a static world, from his visual sensation and cast of mind. It meant a complete reaching towards the future.²

A "film sketch", entitled "A nagyváros dinamikája" (Dynamic of the Metropolis) published in Kassák's journal *Ma* (Today) in 1924 (though dated 1921-22), plays with fast changing camera positions, glib rhythms and unexpected analogies. The screenplay is presented graphically as well. Just as a tiger paces up and down the cage, so do the railway signals move automatically ("a-u-t-o-m-a-t-i-c-a-l-l-y", Moholy-Nagy writes); the wheel is turning and the artist is turning, the movement of an aircraft describes a spiral, the spiral continues in the motion of vehicles moving towards the centre of a star-shaped square, and then "the centre of the square opens up and everything sinks in. (The camera is tipped over so as to give the viewer the sense of tumbling.)" This short screenplay luxuriates in freedom itself—images running right and left, aerial photographs, the motion of water splashing up like a fountain, riding on a roller-coaster, on a Ferris-wheel, a "football match", "fast tempo", "wild dance caricatures, street-walkers, boxing." Raw, rushing motifs. The rhythmically rolling sequence turns into a megapolopolitan drum roll. "This film does not intend to teach, it does not moralize and does not tell a story," Moholy-Nagy added.

In the Berlin of the early twenties, artists approximated to film through mere visual possibilities and not through telling a dramatic story. Moholy-Nagy's notions blended the photographic approach of the age (subjects recorded from unusual an-

gles: with the camera placed on the ground or turned downwards from a roof, in most cases turned diagonally towards the subject) with Walter Ruttmann and Viking Eggeling's original animation technique, with drawings and signs added to the film-frames by hand.

In making a film, Moholy-Nagy was perhaps most interested in light, even more so than in motion. His paintings show transparent planes dissolving into each other, and this transparency was a proof to him of the ability of light to penetrate through the material. When making a photogram, the light driven along a forced course in the laboratory is caught on thinner or thicker materials, and depending on the density of the material, in other words, the amount of light it can absorb, the picture will have a darker or paler tone on the photograph. The fact that a solid material proves to be penetrable, verified Moholy-Nagy's belief that everything is possible; this conviction which can be found at the heart of all his works and writings might have sparked off his often quoted "everyone is talented".³

Today we can only add an alarmed question mark to the assumption that technical development can improve the world. We can be genuinely sorry not to be able to live in an age like that of Moholy-Nagy's youth, when intellectual sweep and historical perspective did not make it impossible to believe in the predominance of good among the forces of the world. Moholy-Nagy would now be a hundred years old. If he were living today he would certainly have long ago arrived in the cybernetic space of virtual reality, where he would have found further proof for everything being possible and everyone talented. ☛

2 ■ László Moholy-Nagy: *Vision in Motion*, Chicago, Paul Theobald, 1947.

3 ■ "Everyone is Talented", in László Moholy-Nagy: *The New Vision*. New York, George Wittenborn Inc., 1947, p. 17.

István Nemeskürty

Sentence of the Lake

A Pre-neorealist Film by Paul Fejos and Peverell Marley Rediscovered

Sound films were first made in Hungary from the spring of 1931, two films being made that year, *A kék bálvány* (The Blue Idols), and the evergreen *Hyppolit a lakáj* (Hyppolit the Valet). Further production was threatened by the depression of 1932. A government freeze on transferring money caused difficulties. To overcome these, the French producer Adolphe Osso was willing to invest his frozen Hungarian assets in film making. In 1932 the Osso Company produced four films in Hungary. One of them, *Tavaszi zápor* (Spring Shower) or *Marie, légende Hongrois*, directed by Paul Fejos, has found a mention in the annals of film history. Paul Fejos (1898–1963), after directing a few rudimentary silent movies in Hungary, settled in the United States in the early twenties, acquired a degree in chemistry and medical biology. *The Last Moment* (1927), an amateur movie, achieved such success that large American

studios contracted him to direct a few feature-length movies. Prompted by their success, the Osso Company invited him in the autumn of 1931 to direct a film in Budapest. He arrived, accompanied by the then perhaps most famous cameraman in the world, Peverell Marley (1899–1964), who had shot Cecil B. De Mille's movies (*The Ten Commandments*, *King of Kings*), and later the highly successful *Alexander's Ragtime Band*, among others.

Taking advantage of Fejos's presence, Berci Fodor, owner of Phoebus, a Hungarian distributor, asked the director to make a movie for the Phoebus Company, to be produced by Fodor and associates. In view of the fact that *Tavaszi zápor* presented a critical picture of society in the form of a folk tale, unusual at the time and criticized by the censors, the Phoebus attempt to create a special Hungarian trend in films deserves respect.

Although the script of *Tavaszi zápor* was written to Fejos's instructions by Ilona Fülöp, a Hungarian journalist and script girl in Hollywood and the best Hungarian scriptwriter of the day, István Mihály, was asked to write the script for the Phoebus production, it was clear that the basic plan, the choice of theme and the plotlines were undoubtedly Fejos's own. In both films, Fejos narrated folk tales in his own peculiar and creative manner.

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as well as a film expert and the author of numerous books on Hungarian culture, history, literature and films.

He has also written screen-plays, the libretto for a rock opera and adaptations for the stage.

Even as a young man Fejos was attracted by folk traditions. In 1920, he directed a village passion play. In the play the villagers performed the sufferings and death of Christ on the Cross. Returning to Hungary, he turned with fresh interest to these traditions, which, obviously, the American companies would not have understood. With Peverell Marley's unique expertise at hand, he wanted to present Hungarian folk customs and the social conditions of villagers and fishermen under the pretext of a dramatic story set in a village on the shore of Lake Balaton in the film *Itél a Balaton* (Sentence of the Lake). Although the method is hardly unique—see, for example, F.W. Murnau's film *Tabu*, set in the South Seas—it is significant.

The story of *Sentence of the Lake* is as follows:

After a vintage celebration, a master fisherman (played by Gyula Csontos) marries off his daughter (Mária Medgyessy, a dancer at the Vienna Opera and a silent movie heroine) to a young fisherman (Ernő Elekes, a raw talent) who is often away from home. The young woman welcomes the attentions of a young peasant lad (a first movie role for Antal Páger, later a screen and stage celebrity). The gossipy old women of the village take note of this, and when the fishermen return empty-handed, they start a rumour that the lake is angered by the young woman's infidelity, and only by sacrificing her will the lake be appeased. The father puts his daughter into a boat and pushes it out into the stormy lake: if innocent, he says, she will survive.

Both men, husband and suitor, throw themselves into the stormy lake after her. After a short struggle, the peasant lad manages to clamber onto the boat. However, when she sees her husband drowning, she begs her suitor to save him. He jumps back into the water and saves the husband at the loss of his own life.

Although this story is clearly invented, there are a number of legends, superstitions, folk songs linked to Lake Balaton. One is the singular behaviour of the lake, of which Fejos was aware. Although Lake Balaton is larger than Lake Geneva, it is much shallower, with an average depth of only three meters—it contains fifty times less water than Lake Geneva. As a result, squalls can whip up extremely powerful and large waves, and even today can bring death to the unwary. Fejos knew of this, which was why he chose Balaton as the setting of his story. As an authentic picture of folk customs, social events appear in the background of the story, with the impact of real sociophotographs, to use a current expression. The sound track is also almost naturalistically original: conversations at the market, the sounds of vintage celebration, swearing, bawling, all authentic.

While scenes in *Spring Shower*, directed according to the wishes and constraints of the Osso Company, have the "folksy" quality of the popular theatre—Annabella wears a "matyó" peasant costume to church—*Sentence of the Lake* is notable for its authenticity (vintage, wedding, funeral, kermess).

Peverell Marley's photography is far superior to the contemporary average. He switches with amazing ease from brutally realistic photography, from the presentation of village life to poetic light and shade effects, landscape photography. His Hungarian assistant, István Eiben, was able to pass on what he learned to Barna Hegyi and a dozen of his colleagues including the now eighty-year-old György Illés, whose students are among the most sought after cameramen in Hollywood today. It is noteworthy that Marley did not photograph any other ethnographic documentary before or after. He followed Fejos's ideas faithfully and with success, his lighting techniques and daring camera tracking were examples for later Hungarian films.

The thirties saw some works about the sea and the life of the peoples living by it blending anthropology and the feature film (Flaherty's *Man of Aran*, 1934), but *Sentence of the Lake* with its poetry and brutal realism may be considered a precursor of Italian neo-realism and its films devoted to fishermen (Visconti's *La terra trema*; Rossellini's *Stromboli*), as well as to the Hungarian realism of the war years (István Szűts's *Emberek a havason* [People in the Alps], 1942).

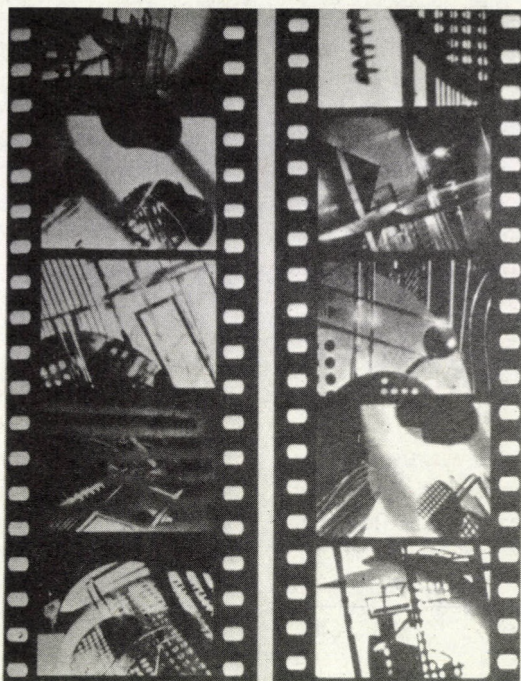
Sentence of the Lake had been thought to be lost until a copy was recently found. That is why this "moving photograph", shot sixty-three years ago has caused a sensation. It receives no mention in Hungarian film literature, nor in the occasional works dealing with Fejos.

Fejos's life still has many secrets. His biographies are inaccurate, incomplete,

and contradictory. Little wonder, for between 1933 and 1935 he directed a few pictures in Austria and Denmark before disappearing from view in the second half of the thirties. *En handful ris*, a Danish-Swedish production again called attention to him in 1937. The film is about an expedition to Thailand, made with the same method as *Sentence of the Lake*.

After this, Fejos abandoned film-making completely. During the Second World War, he organized successful expeditions to islands to the North-East of Australia and the old Inca-ruled areas of South America, bringing back a number of important discoveries. For this he was appointed to head an American foundation. Until his death he devoted himself to archeology and medical biology. It is said he refused to listen to any mention of films.

All the same, his own will last. 21



László Moholy-Nagy:
Light Display: Black-White-Grey: Film Montage, 1930

John Cunningham

From Imre to Emeric—a Hungarian Screenwriter in England

Kevin MacDonald: *Emeric Pressburger: The Life and Death of a Screenwriter*. Faber & Faber, 1994, 467 pp. £20.

“Written, produced and directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger.” So runs the credit on a remarkable number of British films as diverse as *A Canterbury Tale* (1944) and *The Tales of Hoffman* (1951), a total of 19 collaborative efforts, most of them made under the auspices of their own company, the Archers. Powell, the extroverted but sometimes moody and unpredictable Englishman, and Pressburger, a quiet, almost shy Hungarian Jew, made one of the most unlikely teams in the history of film. Yet it was probably their very difference that made them so effective, their collaboration so fruitful and, even when they had split up, their friendship so close and loyal. In an industry not exactly renowned for such qualities, Powell and Pressburger stand out, not just for the excellence of their work but for the integrity with which they executed it.

Of the two it is Powell who has attracted most attention. Powell was the director, Pressburger the screenwriter, and directors always get more attention from film

analysts than anyone else in film-making. This, however, often leads to an imbalance, and author Kevin MacDonald hands out a few well-deserved swipes at some of the excesses of the “auteur” theory. Powell has also been more prolific in writing about himself. His autobiography, *My Life in Movies* (two volumes, Heinemann 1986 and 1992), along with Luis Buñuel’s *My Last Breath*, must rank amongst the best autobiographical writing from the film world.

Pressburger, by contrast, has written virtually nothing about himself. However, this task has now been admirably filled by his grandson, Kevin MacDonald, whose access to personal documents, astute detective work, and obvious enthusiasm for his subject has provided lovers of British cinema with a treasure trove of information about the other “half” of The Archers. Although as yet only available in English, it also provides the interested Hungarian reader with the story of yet another of their sons who made his name overseas in the film industry. In this respect Pressburger fully deserves to stand alongside those better known film emigrés, the Korda brothers, Michael Curtiz, the animator John Halas, the actors Béla Lugosi, Peter Lorre, the actress Ilona Massey, the cameramen László Kovács and Vilmos Zsigmond, to name only a few.

John Cunningham,

born in Yorkshire, England, has lived and taught in Hungary for four years.

Pressburger's early life reads like that of many of his contemporaries from the Hungarian Jewish middle class: a good education, various moves from one town to another, the search for higher education and, finally the life of an emigré. He was born in Miskolc, on the 5th December 1902 and, surprisingly, his birthplace, Szentpéteri utca 3, is still standing. All the more remarkable, as MacDonald points out, this was the only place in present-day Hungary where Pressburger ever lived. Responding to various pressures the family moved a number of times and the young Imre ("Emeric" was to come later) spent his youth in Subotica (then Szabadka, now part of modern-day Serbia) and Timișoara (then Temesvár, now in Romania). It was in Timișoara and particularly at the Jewish school there that the young boy developed his love of literature, the arts and became an accomplished story-teller.

After the 1920 Treaty of Trianon Pressburger found himself in another country. Not wishing to live in Romania, he wheeled and dealt to gain acceptance at an engineering college in Prague. Here he lived a typical student's life and, amongst other things, developed a love of cinema.

Prague, however, was a relatively brief sojourn. Currency difficulties made it hard for Romanian students (which officially Pressburger was) to study there and in 1923, along with a couple of friends, he moved to Stuttgart. The experience was not particularly edifying and in a later film, *One of our Aircraft is Missing* (1942), the featured RAF bomber crew are depicted unloading their wares on Stuttgart. Such references can be found in a number of his films.

Although initially an engineering student, Pressburger had artistic inclinations. As an accomplished musician he subsidised his meager student income by playing the violin in cafés. On his father's

death he returned briefly to Timișoara but an attempt to set up a radio business failed and, when call-up papers for the Romanian army arrived, he returned to Germany. Unable because of this to return to Romania, he was to spend the rest of his life in exile.

This second move to Germany coincided with the height of the Weimar artistic fervour, and Pressburger gravitated to its very heart—Berlin. Here, surrounded by a unique artistic milieu, he struggled, went hungry, wrote and eventually had a story accepted by the UFA film studio. UFA was then the most prestigious and influential film studio outside Hollywood. It was little short of miraculous that his script was accepted.

What followed was essential for Pressburger's future. Unlike the "sink-or-swim" philosophy of the Hollywood studios, UFA provided expertise and training in all aspects of film-making. He was also introduced to the UFA concept of planning. All elements of the film were meticulously planned in advance. This attention to planning, detail and punctuality were to remain with Pressburger for the rest of his life.

It was an invaluable apprenticeship for the new screenwriter and one which Alfred Hitchcock also benefited from. As an added bonus Pressburger, now with a Germanic "Emmerich" for his first name, was surrounded by a host of talent difficult to imagine nowadays in one establishment: Billy Wilder, Max Ophüls, Otto Preminger, the Siodmark brothers, and many more. Emmerich moved into the *Dramaturgie* department at UFA for the not inconsiderable monthly salary of 400 RM. There he was remembered by Billy Wilder as "not an assertive guy—as opposed to me—he was really quite withdrawn. But when you got him talking he was one of these wonderfully interesting people, with so many stories."

Pressburger participated in a number of projects while at UFA, many of them with Günther Stapenhorst and Reinhold Schunzel who, although nowadays not so well-known, were at the time among the leading figures of German cinema. In total he contributed to sixteen UFA films (although he wasn't credited on all of them); also included were some French versions of the German films, editing work and the only Hungarian-language film he ever worked on, *A vén gazember* (The Old Rogue) which premiered in Budapest on December 22nd, 1932.

This was the Hungarian-language version of *...Und es Leuchtet die Puszta* (*Bei uns in Budapest...*) [...And the Plains are Gleaming/Once Upon a Time in Budapest...], released a few months later in February 1933. Directed by Heinz Hille, it was based on Kálmán Mikszáth's novel *A vén gazember* (Old Rogue) and it provided Pressburger with one of the few opportunities he had of returning to Hungary where the film was shot. For MacDonald the film displays a certain characteristics of Pressburger's approach:

A vén gazember is a distillation of "typical Hungary"; it presents us with an intense portrait of the national identity that at times verges on caricature. This is perhaps not what one would expect from a writer with Emeric's cosmopolitan mind, a Hungarian who had not lived in Hungary for 12 years. But this ability—and desire—to go straight to the heart of a nation's identity, no matter how much of an outsider he may have been, was to remain a crucial characteristic of Emmerich's work.

Pressburger was now well-established at UFA but this provided no protection in the events following his return to Germany. Like all German companies, UFA started to dismiss its Jewish employees. He avoided the first wave of sackings but

eventually, tipped off by a friend at the studio (who was also a member of the Nazi Party), he caught the train for Paris, leaving behind his beloved Mercedes car. As a Jew, he wouldn't have been able to sell it.

Paris was by no means as fruitful for Pressburger as Berlin had been. His money ran out quickly and work came only sporadically. The French film industry was neither as big as the German nor as well organized. But eventually some scripts of his were accepted and, while working on an English-language version of *La Vie Parisienne* (1936), he made his first visit to his future home, Britain. Whether it was the impetus of this visit, the envisioned possibility of Britain as a stepping stone to the USA (where so many ex-UFA employees ended up), or just the availability of more work, Pressburger crossed the Channel for good in September 1936.

In many respects the British film industry of the time was British in name only. Its most dominating figure and personality was another Hungarian, Alexander Korda. There was also a small Hungarian emigré community and a number of refugees from the German film industry some of whom Pressburger had known at UFA—Rudolph Cartier (formerly Katscher), Wolfgang Wilhelm and his old boss Gunter Stapenhorst.

Not suprisingly, in this kind of environment Pressburger was able to use his contacts and obtain work. It was probably the Hungarian composer Miklós Rózsa who first introduced Pressburger to Korda. He was handed the script for *The Spy in Black*, a star-vehicle for Conrad Veidt (Major Strasser in *Casablanca*). Pressburger went away and rewrote it and presented it at a meeting where Michael Powell was in attendance. Powell was impressed; "It was a real piece of conjuring", he said. Recollecting their first meeting, Powell described Pressburger as:

a short compact man, with beautiful observant eyes, and a broad intellectual forehead, formally and neatly dressed. Although small in stature, he looked well made and strong, both in person and in his convictions. And he obviously feared nobody, not even Alexander Korda. (p. 145)

As a spy film set in the First World War, *The Spy in Black* had a certain topicality; it was released on 12 August, less than a month before the Nazi invasion of Poland. Pressburger had seen the war coming, and a year earlier had offered his services to his adopted country. He wrote to the Ministry of Labour: "I have been living here for three years and was always keen to find a way to express my gratitude towards this country and the British people. I would like to express my anxiety to serve this country as best I may in the event of war." At the outbreak of the war he was put on the Central Register of Aliens with Special Skills.

Pressburger served Britain by doing what he did best—making films. He worked on 11 productions during the war, most of them with Michael Powell and the company they formed in July 1941, The Archers. Their first big success was *49th Parallel* (1941), followed in 1942 by *One of Our Aircraft is Missing* (the first Archers' film). Both were well-received by audiences and by the government, who kept a wary eye on the film industry.

The Archers' 1943 production of *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, however, evoked the wrath of none other than Winston Churchill. He saw its criticism of the British officer class as detrimental to army morale. The film also featured a sympathetic portrayal of a German refugee (brilliantly played by Anton Walbrook, one of the Archers' favourite actors) echoing their ambiguous, sympathetic portrayal of a German prisoner in *49th Parallel*. Stupidly and ineffectively, Churchill tried

to have the film banned. Of course, this only made it more popular than ever and it played to packed houses everywhere, advertised as "The Film Churchill Tried to Ban!"

Other war films were not so popular. The evocation of the English countryside and the historical past in *A Canterbury Tale* (1944) mystified virtually everyone at the time, yet today it is regarded as among their finest works. As MacDonald says, "over the years the dormant power of the film came alive". It and their next film, *I Know Where I'm Going* (1945), were part of the Archers' "crusade against materialism". With the war almost won they were turning to ideas about what shape the future world should take.

IKWIG, as it became known, was shot largely on location in Mull, Scotland, and the clash of modern material desires and traditional, historical values captured the minds of contemporary audiences. It was one of their greatest triumphs.

With the end of the war, Pressburger was able to look back on a period of success in his new home. Although The Archers were never in the financial big league, he had acquired stability and some degree of security. In 1946 he became a British citizen, changed his first name to Emeric and in the following year married his second wife, Wendy. A cloud hung over him, however: his mother, who had lived with him for a time in Germany, had returned to Miskolc in the '30s and in May 1944 she had been deported to Auschwitz, where she perished.

Peace required a new direction and Powell and Pressburger embarked on a series of films which almost continuously outraged critical opinion: *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946), *Black Narcissus* (1947), *The Red Shoes* (1947), *The Small Back Room* (1949), *Gone to Earth* (1950), and *The Tales of Hoffmann* (1951). All of these

films, in one way or another involved elements of fantasy, the Gothic or the surreal. The critical establishment expected British films to display realism; this was the strength of British cinema and its purpose in life. But the Archers resisted this and continued to make films with amazing colourful sequences in them, such as a moving heavenly staircase in *A Matter of Life and Death* or the dance sequences in *The Red Shoes*—masterpieces of visual extravagance. Even *The Small Back Room*, their most “realist” film, lapses into expressionism when the alcoholic bomb disposal expert wrestles within a gigantic whisky bottle. Contrary to the critics’ expectations, not all these films were box-office flops: *The Red Shoes* was very popular and *Gone to Earth* a modest success. But, as MacDonald explains:

Suddenly, the film-makers who could do no wrong could do nothing but. What had happened? Certainly the times were changing, the black and white, cinematically straightforward Ealing Comedies, with their quasi-socialist vindication of the “little man”, were at the height of their popularity. The quality of the Archers’ films, if it had not actually gone down, had changed. As they drew further away from the war, the centre of gravity, the films became more diaphanous, less attached to the real world. (pp. 316–7)

In a sense, *The Tales of Hoffman*, judged by Martin Scorsese to be their most successful film, was the beginning of the end for the partnership; disagreements occurred over whether a particular section should be cut. Then later Powell began working in the theatre. The remaining three Archers films were all unsuccessful and include *O...Rosalinda!!* (1955), judged to be so bad that it wasn’t screened at the first major Powell and Pressburger retrospective.

In the meantime, Pressburger’s second wife had left him. It wasn’t all downhill, though; in 1953 he was presented to the Queen at Buckingham Palace and he later proudly displayed a photograph of them together. *Ill Met by Moonlight* (1957) was the last film with Powell until a collaboration in Australia, *They’re a Weird Mob* (1966) and a children’s film, *The Boy who Turned Yellow* (1972). Still, despite the termination of their partnership the two men continued to be good friends, maintaining a lively correspondence and seeing each other frequently.

In 1970 Pressburger moved to a cottage in Aspell, Suffolk, where he spent the rest of his days. Appropriately enough for the writer of *The Red Shoes*, it was called Shoemaker’s Cottage. Here he continued to indulge in “stomach patriotism”, namely his passion for Hungarian food—always served in Rabelaisian portions. Together with two friends from the Hungarian émigré community, the journalist George Mikes and the writer Arthur Koestler, he formed the “Pig Committee”, with Mikes voted “Captain of the Pigs”. Two very English porkers were purchased and raised by a local farmer. On Pressburger’s 80th birthday, 5th December 1982, the pigs were butchered.

The first retrospective of Powell and Pressburger films came in London in 1971; others were to follow, including a full retrospective at the National Film Theatre, London, in 1978. In 1980 they were both invited to appear on Desert Island Discs, BBC radio’s popular but slightly oddball music programme. Gavin Millar’s 1981 BBC-2 programme, *A Very British Affair*, introduced new sections of the British public to their work, and Fellowships in the British Film Academy and British Film Institute were awarded to them in the 80s. After the lean years of the 50s and 60s, the two were now

receiving a second wave of recognition.

New generations of film-makers discovered their work, Martin Scorsese for example, and up and coming British directors such as Derek Jarman were also influenced. The fledgling film-makers found in the work of the veteran duo a love of cinema as cinema, as spectacle and not just as a "carrier" of a message. In MacDonald's opinion the newcomers found "passion, colour, irony and wit in the Archers' films and admired and imitated them." Perhaps above all they found films not bound or restricted by the norms of realism, films not afraid of extending or violating boundaries, of exploiting the film medium to its full potential.

Except for the odd appearance usually with Powell at some retrospective or other,

Pressburger was now in retirement. Still, he travelled occasionally to London to visit his club, the Saville. But inevitably old age took its toll: he became ill and died on February 5th, 1987. He was buried in the village church in Aspall. His friend and partner was to follow him a few years later, in 1990.

In writing his grandfather's biography, in which there is so much to praise and so little to fault, Kevin MacDonald has not only given us a fascinating glimpse into the Hungarian artistic community in Britain, he has redressed an imbalance which until now has slanted our appreciation of the work of Powell and Pressburger. Admirers of their films, present and future, will be in his debt. *20*



*László Moholy-Nagy: Gypsies.
Film Montage. 1932*

Tamás Koltai

To Be a Victim

Molière: *Le Festin de Pierre* (Don Juan); Bulgakov: *Intrigue of Hypocrites* • Kléist: *The Prince of Homburg* • Rostand: *Cyrano de Bergerac* • Brecht: *Baal* • G.B. Shaw: *Saint Joan* • Anouilh: *Becket ou l'honneur du Dieu* • Arthur Miller: *The Crucible* • Chekhov: *The Three Sisters* • Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

The theatre usually holds up the major plays in its canon as a mirror to our own day, with the secret desire to make us recognize ourselves in them. Our relationship with the past, precisely due to the distance, always has the potential of shifting, and this on the stage allows for play. We can call across the centuries, we can accost the great figures of old and can find out what happened to them in bygone days. Are they like us or like their former selves? How should we look at them? How does the classical hero, the exceptional individual comport himself in the theatre of today? Some recent Budapest productions provide some answers.

The director of the Új Színház (New Theatre) in Budapest, which has just finished its first season, is himself a special personality. Gábor Székely made exciting theatre in Szolnok during the 1970s before he brought part of his young company with him to try to reform the Budapest National as its artistic director; he became politically inconvenient and was replaced in 1982. He then brought into being, again with a company that thought along the

same lines, the Katona József company which has since made an international name for itself. Due to disagreements on the company's internal and professional development, he resigned in 1988. His last production in Hungary, in that year, was a *Le Misanthrope*. This season, after working for years in Germany, on his return, he again went to Molière for *Don Juan*, and again to György Cserhalmi to take the title role.

This Don Juan is a weary, haggard fugitive. A Don Juan who is no longer young, perhaps ill, for at times he painfully massages his heart. The signs that he displays are mainly those of nervous exhaustion. On faith, his view is that which ever since Molière's time has scandalized the simple-minded: "I believe that two times two makes four, and that four and four makes eight." The rationalist and free-thinker's credo, still in our own day the most hideous sin in the eyes of the general public held at bay by dogmas. Yet there is no trace in Don Juan's "unbelief" of contempt or cynicism. He is obviously deeply touched by his relation to the transcendental. He simply does not want to speak about it. His pale silence shows a typically intellectual spasm. He does not even have time for meditation. Elvira, tortured by passion and then calming down, the deluded peasant girls, the revengeful broth-

Tamás Koltai,

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is our regular theatre reviewer.*

ers, the unpaid M. Dimanche, the reproachful father, and the Commander in the graveyard and as a guest for dinner—all that is like running amok. It is the essence of Don Juan's life condensed into two days—in death's antechamber.

The sets display Don Juan's life in metaphorical space. The living space of a protagonist fleeing himself is temporariness—the state of being en route. A sloping dirt road flanked by plank doors leads up onto the stage which has a sliding glass wall to provide an impression of being without or within; with a dilapidated marble hall, and carved church choir these mark Don Juan's double—real and virtual—living space. The iron structure that holds the spectacle into an organic frame is decaying. The wind, as if the harbinger of death, from time to time rattles the broken window, sweeping dry leaves onto the stage, to the hollow rumble heard before an earthquake.

Squirming in the antechamber to death, Don Juan goes his own way with a chilly passion. He is someone who has lost his illusions about the world and himself, who has been bled dry by an eternal quest for something that has real sense and offers and explanation. At the end of his road, a slight, hollow-voiced little man dressed in bronze arrives as Heaven's representative. No thunder-claps, no sulphurous trapdoors opening up, and no pyrotechnics to scare medieval-minded souls. The statue of the Commander gently enfolds the sinner in his arms, crushes his temples emphatically with a single gesture and, without raising his hand, closes his eyes in a gesture of vengeance and forgiveness, cruel and compassionate all at once.

So in this production Don Juan is a rebel, a searcher condemned to perdition, a self-torturer who hates hypocrisy and false conventions—drained marriages and moral imperatives, which are empty from

the outset. In a final, desperate turn, when he declares himself a hypocrite, he is only revealing the real face of the world: sanctimoniousness and a hunger for lucre disguised by piety. The very things that Molière suffered just at the time he was writing *Don Juan*.

Mikhail Bulgakov wrote his play on the revenge of the clergy, mortally offended over *Le Tartuffe*, exacted on Molière. *Intrigue of the Hypocrites* was staged by the Hungarian National Theatre of Kolozsvár (Cluj) directed by Gábor Tompa. This Hungarian company, working in the current difficult conditions in Romania, has gained some major international successes. In 1993, they toured Britain with another Tompa production, *The Bald Primadonna*. It had thirty performances in London, and received the critics' award for the best foreign production of that year.

Although the direct parallel between Bulgakov, at the mercy of Stalin and Molière, enjoying the ambivalent patronage of Louis XIV, has somewhat faded, the artist and creator still remains at the mercy of those in power, of money, of the political poker games. The difference is that defencelessness has become more complicated. In Tompa's interpretation, the king is impersonal and inaccessible, strictly bound to protocol. His presence is that of a benevolent institution, passing judgement on minor matters, with the moral support of the democratic public incorporated into the system. The public is personified by the Just Cobbler, who is a parody of the loud Shakespearean fool.

Real power resides in Ideology, in the priests, the Society of the Holy Sacrament, and the "manipulating office" of the secret police, raised to a court of justice. Ceremonies blend Christian ritual with exorcism and the political trial with bacchanalia. Outstanding in this production are

the scenes leading up to Molière's accusation: a seductive whore is transformed into a priestess of the Supreme Justice, the archbishop acting as public prosecutor dons the red cloth on the judge's table as a bishop's robe to frighten the intended victim in a devil's mask. The masked and mitred priests imitate an endless auto-da-fé, chanting prayers in Latin; unmasked, as their own selves, they prove to be just plain felons.

Playfulness, freedom and uncontrollable ardour can obviously only lose out when caught between the pincers of the state and ideologically inspired ritual. The Molière of the play moves from naive and credulous admiration for the king to an enraged shattering of the idol, and finally to a calmness which finds ease in acting on stage. The unequivocal position of the disgraced subject, the abandoned lover and the cheated victim—an actor left with nothing but to die of acting—provides a harrowing dramatic experience.

The relationship between the poetic mind and political power is also the subject of Kleist's *The Prince of Homburg*. A staging of this complicated 19th century classic must interpret the relationship between dream and reality, between law and despotism. The extent to which the Prince of Homburg acts on his dreamer's disposition has to be decided on. Does he awaken from a vision of receiving a hero's laurel crown and love or, like a sleep-walker, does he heed the dictate of his intoxicated soul to give the order for a cavalry charge, and so glory in the light of national gloire and the beloved woman? The Elector of Brandenburg condemns the Prince of Homburg to death because his premature command to charge was against orders. If he were to exempt the prince for his breaking the law, he himself would be a law-breaker, and thus a despot. Even

though Brandenburg won the battle because of the cavalry charge, this does not change a *raison d'État*, in which freedom is the observance of law, and despotism makes concession to sentiment.

Kleist did not live to see his play which he meant as patriotic, accused of undermining Prussian ideals. This apotheosis of Brandenburg was written by a former Prussian officer of the guards, and the dissent he reflects in his hero must be taken into account by any production.

The director, Iván Hargitai, still at drama school, knows more about the play than he has managed to get across in the Új Színház. For him this is not a play taking place in a delirium (a decision that saves him from artistic overkill) but a reflection of awakening to reality, in which reverie only marks an extreme. This Homburg is not a lyrical somnambulant but a disciplined child of Brandenburg, who in his sleep confronts the hidden weakness of his self. In Brandenburg you must not be weak, nor—synonyms of weakness—passionate, immoderate and ardent. The "dream play" releases the prince's personality. In this sense Kleist's play is a generation drama; as Hargitai also presents it, desire for glory, immoderation and passion are features of suppressed youth. Nor is the Elector a grim, vain or jealous old man who seeks to destroy a talented younger man; he is rather the first man of discipline, cultivating obedience, the foundation stone of the system. He needs a subject who accepts this order and goes to his death out of a respect for the law. Homburg might even become free if he were to find the sentence unjust, but he would no longer exist for the Elector, Brandenburg education would have proved to be futile. The closing scene in the Új Színház production ironically refers to "order" restored: the Brandenburgers, including the prince, draw them-

selves up into two files, uniformity by "joining the ranks".

Cyrano de Bergerac, the great hero of late Romanticism, is not really a "classical" figure: he is not willing to join the ranks. In real life Cyrano was an original poet and thinker; the play is more concerned with the witty bully, the amorous swordsman and, above all, the man with a large nose. The Vígszínház production's (directed by István Verebes) Cyrano is a more complex figure than that. Instead of a conspicuous blusterer, an intellectual iron man, or the acrobatic duellist, this is an autonomous individual who is irritated by the untalented, the time-servers and conformists, and is fully capable of showing this disapproval. This Cyrano is in no way conspicuous; he is morose rather than supercilious, commonplace rather than eccentric, and indifferent rather than self-conceited. His reserve has more melancholy and resignation than is usual. Given all this, however, this production provides him with far too large a nose.

It is safe to say that the more Cyrano philosophizes the more his Cyrano nose expresses an inner nose, a mental nose as it were. A Cyrano bringing suit against the world himself makes this clearly larger than average nose grow, as if turning it into a point of impact, a corner stone, provocatively turning it into a totem—a sign of his own weakness. This Cyrano mocks himself so that others cannot. He challenges the world in order to punish it. As a duellist, he edges himself into society so as to hide his solitude. He makes jokes to dissemble his infinite sorrow. He compensates. He plays to be able to hide. He escapes into the body of the handsome Christian in order to allow free rein to his sentimental self, without taking any risk. He sets up as a knight of the Holy Grail for fourteen years in order not to show his

naked soul. The incurable self-esteem and pride are only very partly due to his nose.

This is not what Rostand wrote about, but this is what it is well worth performing. Take the garden scene with Roxane, the single occasion when he inspires intellectual lasciviousness in a languid blue-stocking, not as a misfit operated by remote control, but conquers her, even if unseen, in his own person, with his whole personality. An explanation for and a resolution of the paradox would be in Cyrano escaping permanently from this non-recurring moment into play-acting. If this does not happen in a production, then it lacks humour, the laughter by which melodrama can be snuffed out and the foolish sage who turns his own death into histrionics rewarded.

As a poet and rebel, Baal, the hero of the young Brecht's first play, is much more savage, deviant and immoderate than Cyrano. In the first scene of the Vígszínház Studio's production, Baal is sitting contemptuously amid his snobbish devotees. This starting point is important, for it is the only moment in the play which provides some explanation for the poet's "rebellion", his provocative withdrawal from the bourgeois life. Here Baal provokes with sudden angry determination the confused company of which he, too, is a member. There is nothing singular either in the gesture or in the physical appearance. This Baal is macho, he makes passes at women without any moral scruples and casually takes them, he lives vehemently and crudely, striking the lyre to give poetic expression to his "awareness of life". He seems much more a subcultural, one-man "gang" (almost all he lacks is the fixed, listless grinding of his masticator muscles) than that attractively repulsive idol, the irresistible monster primeval force that Brecht made him out.

Enikő Eszenyi's direction is primarily marked by its professionalism. The scenic sensations are evolved with effects systematically fed in with clock-like regularity. The variable space of the sets are able to provide surprisingly natural effects, whether it is the interior of an inn, a night-club seen from the rear, or a torture chamber with opaline windows. The actors have various materials (water, sawdust, "blood") spilled on them from unexpectedly opening ducts and they pile up on the floor as if to mark new stations in this calvary. The actors themselves undertake the provocation of the physicality and conform to a reality that is rough, crude and sensual, as the situations, the drastic words and gestures dictate. All the same, the formless expressivity of Baal calls for more disciplined explanation. Despite its originality and interest, the production does not follow the stations of Baal to unravel the complex human relations. Colourful and effective episodes there are in plenty, but we do not learn who this monster is who ultimately consumes himself, and whose career on earth ends with the poetic supplication of a wreck of a man dragging himself along.

Enikő Eszenyi, who directed Baal, is an exceptional actress. In this guise, she plays the title role in another Vígszínház production, *Saint Joan*. The essence of the production is caught in the scene in which it is not the maid of Orleans praying on her knees who changes the direction of the wind on the river bank, but an impish, clever pixie who blows the wind vane with all her might, even involving the audience in this. Eszenyi's Joan obliterates that modicum of transcendent piety which even Shaw for all his irony was unable to discard. This Joan does not turn to her connection above, but blows straight into the wind and tries to get us to help her. In the

opening scene, she appears in a red print dress, she easily shifts the heavy wall, one of her stockings flops around loosely, and she has a bag of pumpkin seeds in her hand. She announces her mission as she munches away, and she always makes her appearance from a direction other than the one she is expected from, rather as in a Feydeau farce. She is not the devout peasant maid of the oleographs, with eyes turned upward, rather a whimsical creature who approaches the Dauphin with stealth—one fears that in her goggle-eyed effort to lift the sword she may drop it on his head. The interpretation that Eszenyi and her director János Taub provide is that vocation is not a heroic pose and determination is not high-falutin speech: what a saviour needs is a modicum of common sense and a charisma which is able to overcome, at least temporarily, the vanity, cowardice and selfishness of the majority.

Eszenyi gets over the paradox of her Joan—natural simplicity and natural rationalism. The two are not in an irresolvable contradiction. Simple-mindedness means her incomprehension of the action taken against her as well as ignorance. (Eszenyi even indulges herself in gazing in wonder at the fact that Jeanne is written with double "n".) Rationalism, on the other hand, lifts her relation to the "mission" (to God if you please) and to death to the intellectual level, which culminates in two soliloquies. One is after the coronation, when she recognizes that she has been deserted, the other at the trial when, instead of being committed to the flames, she is sentenced for life. The first is the passionate confession of one bound to her convictions, and the second that of someone clinging to freedom—both typically "intellectual" expressions directed from within. Waiving all posture of martyrdom, she takes the executioner gently by the hand and sets out for the stake, as if she were going for a stroll.

Jean Anouilh's play, *Becket or the Honour of God*, continues Shaw's *Saint Joan*, written thirty-five years previously, in the sense that it projects our century's ideas onto the remote past. Shaw's ecclesiastical and secular potentates chatter away on nationalism and protestantism; Anouilh's pope and cardinals proclaim a freedom for manoeuvre that is a result of the uncertain intentions of the Holy See (in other words, political manipulations).

The play tries to discover what makes a man of the world, Thomas à Becket, into a lord temporal, then spiritual, then an unswerving and invulnerable believer and, finally, a martyr. In honestly seeking an answer, it finds none. "The honour of God," it says at last, which, as in the case of Joan, means, far from a religious transcendency, a kind of lyrical solemnity: to take an absolute responsibility that is above daily conflicts, party strife and the interests of any individual or group. Becket's most attractive feature is that he likes what he is doing and does it well. For him morality is mostly aesthetics, this is how his friend and adversary Henry describes him. But Henry also uses his powers as king, husband, father and man in a rough, primitive, extempore and buffoon-like manner, with little regard for aesthetics. Ultimately, he has Becket murdered, an expressly unaesthetic deed.

István Kolos, who directs the production in the Madács Chamber Theatre, has sufficient sense to amplify the play's message for our own time, in which little stress is laid on aesthetics. This is not easy since, despite the close relationship between the two protagonists, Becket is not an intimate play; it is not substantial enough to be carried by intensive dialogue. In fact, it has hidden theatricality, with spaces opening up behind the words: the monumental dimness of a cathedral, or the metaphoric infinity of a storm-tossed

shore create an atmosphere for the situations.

On the small stage, everything depends on the two actors. The Henry of this production is almost pubertal: an immature individual is great need of Becket's guiding security, a need which he recognizes only when he can no longer turn back. Becket, on the other hand, is a man of aesthetics: he is vain enough to consider—both as the man of the world and the man in a hair-shirt—that unapproachable elegance and the simplicity of a scarcely observable inner pose are of the utmost importance, even if they bring about his death. Unfortunately, the director has omitted to explain that Henry, whether genuinely or for ulterior purposes, has weighed up and assimilated all that the friendship of Becket had meant for him; without this, the sacrifice remains senseless.

A sacrifice, in the final analysis, is always senseless. This is sometimes recognized and revalued by posterity, with the far-sighted rebel often canonized. How much this is worth can be perceived in the ironic epilogue to *Saint Joan*, in which the saint remains just as uncomfortable for our current Zeitgeist as she was as a victim.

Whenever someone in Salem is suspected of witchcraft, the witch-hunters on stage in the Csiky Gergely Theatre production at Kaposvár cast their searching look onto the assembly—including the audience. For anyone may be a witch, you have to be on your guard! Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*—billed by the Kaposvár company as *Istenítélet* (Ordeal)—is hardly worth performing without this gesture, whether concealed or open. Witchcraft trials and the activity of the House Un-American Activities Committee of the 'fifties, which inspired the play, may be history now, but the situation remains valid as long as it is fashionable to exor-

cise devils, to provoke hysterics and manipulate for private interest, personal revenge or because of frustration. Something else remains unchanged, which Miller's John Proctor sets against all this, namely, individual conscience.

János Mohácsi's direction expands the oppressive, narrow-minded medieval atmosphere of the basic story, lending it a timeless character. Instead of starting from the grim objectivity of Miller's dramatic structure, which could be easily "modernized" into taciturn, relentless realism, he enlarges, theatricalizes and, in a sense, demonizes the story, which degenerates from a simple lover's revenge into mass hysterics, lynch-law and auto-da-fé. Thus it is the crowd that becomes the protagonist. A mob, milling restlessly within the grim walls of the town, a crowd composed of individual faces and emotions turned into a threatening mass that shapes and disgorges menacing passions and ideas. In the courtroom scene, when the public, stirred to accuse each other, break through the bar and rush down from their gallery, it is the Heysel stadium in Brussels and the "medieval" rites of football grounds in general that come to mind. The Remington typewriter used by the court clerk, or the machine gun with which Proctor chases the officials from his house are signals merging with the idiom of the performance rather than an actualization of the reality.

For what is in question here is a desperate moment, when the average citizen would otherwise be impotent in the face of terror. The Kaposvár production pays close attention to the defencelessness of the citizen. In the director's interpretation the conflict of the love triangle is of secondary importance. The avalanche is undoubtedly set into motion by the emotional turmoil of three commonplace persons. But what rolls it along is the ideological fanaticism

of those who serve the powers that be, until it has reached such proportions that it can no longer be stopped, no matter how much they would like to stop it. The greatest merit in the production is in how it presents the escalation of fanaticism. Miller's play, which in the course of time has rigidified, becomes in the hand of the director something molten: red-hot, bubbling, liquid iron. The final scene is set in a bleak cattle pen, which gives the impression of an abandoned stable and the control room of a crematorium. In this Utopian limbo the lowing of the stray cattle of those who have been burnt as witches can be heard, while the pathetic adventurers try to stop the disaster they themselves have set in motion. Proctor "unheroically" tries to conclude his special, one-man bargain with his conscience without becoming a tool of the witch-hunters, something that is naturally never possible historically. So the medieval mechanism goes into action and the flames shoot up.

This production received the prize for the best production of the season from the committee of the National Theatre Festival and also carried off the drama critics' prize.

Victims do not always die, sometimes they merely grow old. In the Aluljáró (Subway), the cellar studio of the József Attila Theatre of Budapest, the three sisters, Olga, Masha and Irina, sit in three glass bells, divorced from each other and from the world, in a paraphrase of Chekhov's play. Three middle-aged ladies, in their fifties. They are fair, delicate and distinguished, with an otherworldly wonder in their eyes. Olga's posture involves the meticulousness of a retired headmistress, Masha, her head crowned with russet hair, muses in introspective melancholy, while Irina huddles her blond tress with the settled smile of a young girl.

"How time is passing!" one of them says with Chekhov. Now it has really passed: the idyll of country mansions has gone, the cherry orchard has been cut down, wars, revolutions, death camps have come, an empire has collapsed, but they, the exhibits of a bygone style, sit there in the glass case, make preparations to go to Moscow, surrounded by a heap of luggage, with crumbled earth and frozen water in the cases, reflecting how their life has also crumbled and frozen in the course of nearly a century.

Opting for these three charming, straight-waisted Graces of preserved beauty for the parts of the three sisters, the director, Erzsébet Gaál, clearly wished to do no less than settle accounts with the Chekhovian century. Our century started with Chekhov, with the unrest smouldering behind his idyll, with the dramaturgical riffle hanging on the wall, which—as we well know—has to go off in the final act. It also began with the happiness awaiting mankind which, according to those Chekhov characters with a penchant for philosophizing, should arrive during the two to three centuries to come. The first third of this period is already running out, and the tendency so far is hardly encouraging. The dramaturgical rifle keeps going off regularly, though not exactly for dramaturgical purposes. The cottages built on the site of the cherry orchard, and even the high-rise blocks built in place of the cottages are in ruins, and if "the whole of Russia is our garden," as Trofimov puts it, it is indeed fairly overgrown with weeds and replete with ruins. "How did you think this, Anton Pavlovich?," we ask with growing impatience, while we keep returning to the archetypes, the sisters, who have become more hysterical, more desperate and, occasionally, more mean-spirited. Or, in Erzsébet Gaál's version, they have remained fair, otherworldly and delicate, it is

just that they have "anachronistically" grown old.

The director is thinking along the same lines as Slawomir Mrozek, who in his latest play, *Love in the Crimea*, presents an encyclopaedia of Russia, from the beginning of the century to the present day. His first act is Chekhovian in style, portraying the present as an absurd vision, with the characters (who during these hundred years either grow old or remain at the same age all through) at first referring to Ranevskhaya and Lopahin as friends; at the end of the third act the curtain drops on the spectral of basilisks, skinheads and entrepreneurs.

Compared to this, all that we see in the József Attila Theatre can be termed decent, literary and conservative. The analysis is clear and pure, and the whole thing recalls a laboratory where the body is being X-rayed and one only sees the skeleton. It provides a sterile diagnosis about a depreciated world, with three Prozorov girls in the showcase having aged into museum pieces.

The Katona József Theatre has staged a similar laboratory production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The poet Ádám Nádasdy, also a lecturer in English linguistics at Eötvös University, came up with a new translation for the occasion. Ever since Jan Kott and Peter Brook, this has been a play on censorial errors and the release of inhibitions. The young lovers switch partners in their dreams and the ethereal fairy engages in sodomy. Out of the dark hull of the instincts there surfaces the unconscious. The interpretation of the director, Péter Gothár, is new inasmuch as he employs anaesthesia instead of magic to induce sleep, as if he were preparing for an operation in a sterile surgery. Everything is white, shiny and cold. Petals with a steely sparkle keep

opening and closing. Curtains tied onto a wire cable keep sliding hither and thither. Somniferous fairies in masks with faces back and front bustle around. The anaesthetic is successful. The young lovers continue to chase each other, absolutely free of all pain and somewhat hysterically. Titania, who has taken a drop too much before undergoing narcosis, and the good tradesman Bottom have one another without any courting, at first concupiscence, as it were. Puck appears now with a shopping bag, now with a suitcase, in a threadbare raincoat or a baggy dress suit. He is a janitor and a stable-boy—an irksome, quick-change hobgoblin, slow on the uptake. The masters are the traditional ones, but contrary to tradition, by the end they loose heart because they are treated coldly by Theseus.

The same can be said about the director's treatment of Shakespeare. Everything he devises on stage is a holy miracle, but he remains untouched by the miracle of the play. He is a master whose machinations involve iced emotions and so leave us cold.

All the more success has been sparked off by another *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which reached the stage after the (long) period of gestation of a whole year, with a cast recruited from various companies. The director, János Csányi, himself a young actor, was much too restless to wait his turn in any particular company. He made a new translation of Shakespeare's fairy play for his own use. The audience sits in a forest of swings. Their seats swing at different heights from ropes hanging from wooden frames, and we rock and sway on them unobtrusively, inhaling the space and our stirring, buzzing, creaking presence creates the mysterious nature in which the play is set. We are trees, we are the forest, we are the common breath; we are the collective enigma of our own

selves. Lovers, fairies, tradesmen are lurking among us, with the stage a glade open to our gaze. We become part of the play. The play becomes part of us. The director penetrates to the depth of viscera, dreams and senses, and brings about the down-to-earth world of the text. His ideas are not devised "solutions" but sensorially validated whimsies that spring from the cooperation of the mind and the heart. They are self-forgetting and controlled, incorporated into a system and soaringly free.

The three layers of the play are organically interwoven. The glance of Hippolyta, tied up and dragged roughly before Theseus, reflects the rancour of Titania; Hermia's beseeching look asks for help from another subdued woman—from a Hippolyta whose humiliation is to be accomplished in the person of Titania and her nuptials with the ass. This latter incident is not presented as a kind of grotesque petting: Bottom is a sturdy male, a real bull, whose very erect body is phallic. And as the Pyramus in the play of the tradesmen, he remembers his dream when death overcomes him in the same position.

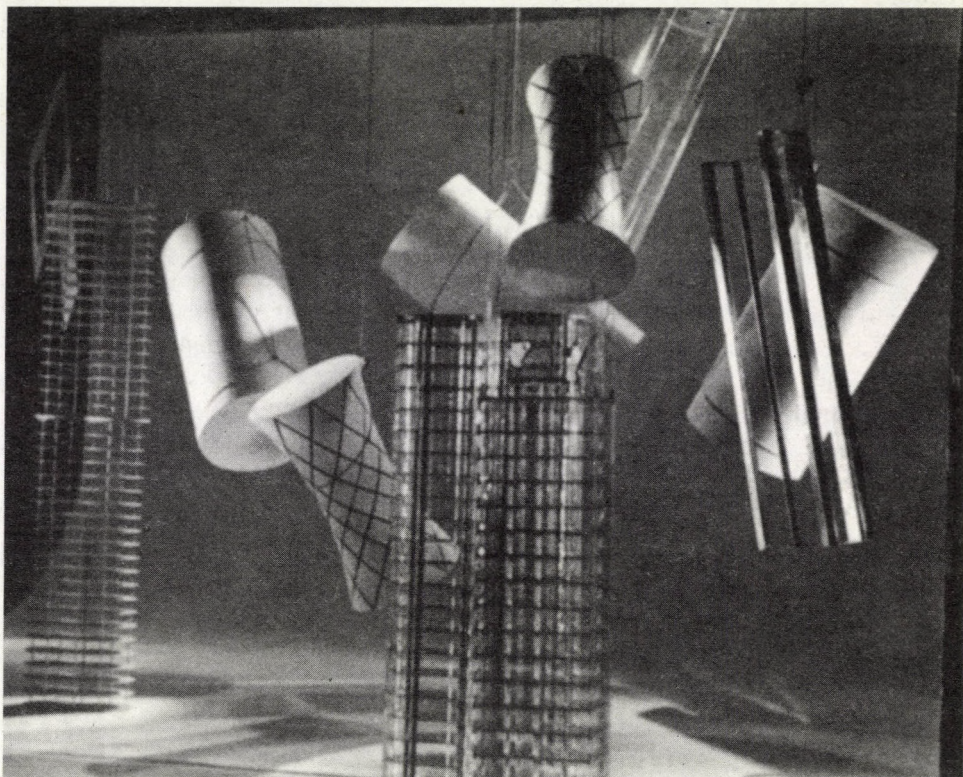
Similar ideas and motifs ran through the whole production. The ethereal, priggishly flaunting, soft and mellowly feminine fairy queen unfolds from the brutalized, abused, surly Amazon queen, a feral, gawky and coarse blonde with short coiled locks and boots, like a butterfly slipping out of its cocoon. Theseus suffers for his vanity, jealousy and lust for power—the male agonies of partnership, in the form of Oberon. An introverted intellect, with a doomed passion for the whimsical, self-willed only Woman. The lesson he intended for Titania is not wry victory but the sceptical realization of the prospective outcome if one leads a hyper-sexed male into the arms of the beloved lady. The Bottom of the production perfectly fits

such a dubious experiment, being made up of mere body and a large slice of innocent soul. Puck, the hobgoblin of magic love spells, is a slim stripling in stretch overalls; when he applies the miraculous drops of the love potion on the chosen victim, he prostrates himself over her shaking in every limb and his task performed, he drops off her languidly as after the sexual act.

The Athenean lovers are unrestrained simpletons. A great part of the text of the tradesmen is contemporary improvisation. This turns the amateur theatricals of the tradesmen into an artistic credo: a gentle parody of contemporary theatre, of heroic

dilettantism. Its atelier humour inspires roars of laughter and its sacred rapture for the theatre induces tears in everyone who has tried his hand at clownery.

Freedom in the theatre is marked out by the limits of the imagination. And imagination is infinite. Even if it sounds paradoxical, it can bridge the distance between people in an intimate theatrical space. This production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* brings the audience into a personal, almost bodily contact with the actors, holding hands with them in spirit, and explodes the frames of doctrinaire theatre together with them. ■



*Sketch for Alexander Korda's film,
Things to Come. 1936*

Sir,—I have been a reader of the *Quarterly* in all its manifestations, including some of the original *HQs*, and have always enjoyed and made use of them in the Radio and elsewhere.

Against that background I want to tell you that this "Summer of 1995" issue is the best ever. Naturally, every reader looks for the things of greatest interest to themselves, and perhaps some will find four articles on the economy a little too much. Not I. "Stabilization Through Restriction", "A Steep Road", "The Information Industry", and "Taking Stock of the Economic Transition" add up to a "primer" on the Hungarian economic predicament.

I was aware of practically all the facts they contained but had never quite added them up or comprehended their meaning so clearly as after reading all four.

"Close-Up: The Roma", while intensely interesting in its own right, was somehow a supplement (or a complement) to the four economic pieces. One realized the immensity of what needs to be done on that one single issue, and then put it against the state of the economy, is to have a greater understanding of the problems that confront the economy.

Apart from the excerpt from the Kornis novel (perhaps I am too conservative about the novel to appreciate the fragmented, tense-hopping style), everything in this issue of *HQ* was of absorbing interest.

Congratulations.

Charlie Coutts
Head of the English Section
Hungarian Radio
Budapest

★

Sir,—In his article on the catalogue of the Pannonia Regia exhibition held at the National Gallery János Makkai mentions (*HQ* 138) the Leonardo da Vinci Madonna that was commissioned for King Matthias Corvinus by Lodovico Sforza as "lost".

There is a rare and beautiful painting of the Madonna by Leonardo da Vinci in the Hermitage in St Petersburg,

Russia. It would be interesting to research its provenance and ownership history. Is it possible that the painting intended for Matthias Corvinus is now exhibited and not "lost"?

Keep up the good work.

László Hege
New York

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It may shock some, but I have to say that the Great Western Powers, Europe and the United States, bear a serious responsibility, for various reasons, for the dramatic situation in which the ex-satellite countries now find themselves. To start with—to go back no further—they are responsible for confirming at Helsinki the fait accompli which Stalin accomplished with impunity by his arbitrary interpretation of the Yalta agreement as it related to the liberated countries. Secondly, they were responsible for an Ostpolitik of dialogue and credits, aimed at stabilizing a world balance of power, which had as its effect the continued survival of communist regimes which were suffering a crisis of stagnation. Thirdly, for having refused, in 1989–1990, to come to the aid of states ready to become part of the European and Western economic and political system, along the lines of the Marshall Plan. The principles of the latter were perfectly applicable to countries that had suffered incalculable damage due to a domination which had been imposed on them with the assent of the West.

There is a moral responsibility for an absence of solidarity and understanding in the face of difficulties with which nations that are so near have to contend, which are nevertheless ready to share the fate of a type of civilization which they had idealized for so long and whose profound crisis they are now weighing up.

From: *A Curtain of Indifference to Follow the Iron Curtain?*
by François Fejtő, pp. 3–9.

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